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NINETEENTH CENTURY POETRY

AN ANTHOLOGY CHOSEN

By
JOHN HAYWARD



CHATTO AND WINDUS
LONDON

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TO ELAINE

TU QUONIAM ES, MEA LUX, MAGNO DIMISSA PERICLO

Preface

AN anthology is an easy target for criticism, so easy, indeed, that it is scarcely worth shooting at. Since there never was an anthology that pleased every one of its readers, the most an editor can hope for is that his selection, while displeasing a few, may give pleasure to a small majority. I hope for nothing better than this, and do not expect the choice of poems, printed in the following pages, to meet with anything near universal approval from those who, for various reasons, find it convenient to have their reading selected for them. There is, I suppose, a technique for making anthologies, and an anthology based on a kind of statistical knowledge of what type of poem appeals to a certain kind of reader will probably obtain the suffrage of a greater number of people than one based, as mine is, on the uncompromising principle of choosing a poem simply because it is to the editor's taste and satisfies certain of his emotional and intellectual needs.

Perhaps no further explanation is needed. But since the limits imposed by the publisher do exercise some sort of control upon his editor, although within these limits his choice may be as free as he wishes, I should like to explain how much I have been influenced by this control.

In the first place, therefore, there is a limit to the number of pages: in the second, a limit—the nineteenth century—to the amount of material available. The first of these is obviously a mechanical affair, and requires no explanation, unless anyone should

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seriously suppose that I have not omitted for reasons of space a great many poems which I should have included, had there been six hundred pages at my disposal instead of half that number. As for the second, my choice has inevitably been determined to some extent by the desire to represent a large number of poets as far as possible according to their relative importance. Now, in a century that produced more and greater poets than in any other similar period in English history, it is not easy to preserve a just proportion. One cannot, for instance, cut out Shelley altogether, in order to drag in a swarm of minor writers, nor is it fair to choose but one poem from each poet in order to increase the quota of authors seeking admission, for in this way it might seem that Clare, say, or Emily Brontë was as important as Wordsworth or Arnold. Quantity, after all, counts for something in our estimation of genius, and when quantity is found combined with quality, then some indication must be given in a selection of this kind. For this reason I have excluded deliberately, though sometimes unwillingly, many of the minor poets of the nineteenth century, but more especially those who had the fortune, or, as it now appears, the misfortune to be the contemporaries of greater men. So much for my omission of names; my target is wide, and those who admire the smaller men cannot fail to hit it with their cherry-stones.

Complementary to the omission of certain names is the exclusion of certain poems—"old favourites"—

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which every reader knows and therefore expects to find. This is not the place to discuss why such poems have earned their popularity; it is sufficient to say that popularity does not always argue perfection, and that "old favourites" are not necessarily the best poems. This, of course, is a matter of taste, but I have not hesitated to eliminate some of them so that space may be given either to better poems, or to poems, as good or almost as good, which are not so widely appreciated. Poems like Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner," Shelley's "The Skylark," Browning's "The Last Ride Together," Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break," Arnold's "The Forsaken Merman," Swinburne's "The Forsaken Garden," Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" and his sister's "Goblin Market," would certainly be chosen for an anthology of nineteenth-century "old favourites." But they have been rejected here, either because they are so well known, or because they are better known than they deserve to be. The target, I repeat, is wide, and I expect some hits on this account; and yet I do not think that an unprejudiced reader, looking no further than the list of contents, will feel that these omissions have injured the reputation of the poets involved.

The period I have had to cover is indeed wide, and more prolific than it is possible to realize without reading, often with pleasure, sometimes with acute boredom, the mass of poetry printed in England

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between the last years of the eighteenth century and the close of the nineteenth. Even excluding, as I have, American writers and, with very few exceptions, extracts from long poems and plays, the volume of lyric poetry from which this anthology has been chosen, is still enormous, and it is difficult, as I have tried to show, to do justice to it.

While the text has been arranged simply in chronological sequence of authors, the extracts from any one poet have been arranged on no other principle than the effective appearance of the page. Typographical elegance, even in the humble way in which it has been attempted in this book, should be the first concern of the printer of poetry; the minimum physical strain should be imposed upon the reader. A chronological order also saves the reader a certain amount of intellectual effort, since no one reading an anthology, or dipping into it—a more common practice—wants to be disturbed by influences and parallels and all the paraphernalia of literary criticism and history. It is enough for him to know that Wordsworth and Coleridge; Byron and Shelley and Keats; Tennyson and Browning; Rossetti and Swinburne and Morris, were contemporaries. It is not even necessary that he should understand what is meant by the Romantic Revival or The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, though a little knowledge of such things does add to the pleasure of reading poetry, and may sometimes throw light on effects which will otherwise remain obscure. The Romantic Revival, for instance, though no exact date

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can be fixed for it, is commonly referred to the publication in 1798 of "Lyrical Ballads," though signs of its coming can be observed throughout the eighteenth century. And yet Crabbe—"Pope in worsted stockings"—was still writing heroic couplets and clinging to the poetic diction of the eighteenth century long after the appearance of "The Ancient Mariner." But if Crabbe persisted in using the old instruments, he used them to express new states of mind, new sensibility; not what he had to say, but his method of saying it was out of date. Spiritually he is part of the Revival, and for this reason he is not out of place in the opening pages of this book, where his poetry provides a suitable introduction and curious contrast to Wordsworth's which it immediately precedes.

Just as there is no precise date at the beginning of the period from which this anthology has been chosen, neither is there one at the end. Meredith, Swinburne and Hardy were still writing at the beginning of the present century, although they belong to it as little as Wordsworth and Coleridge did to the one in which they were born. But if there must be a limit, then the most appropriate one is the 'nineties of the last age, and the most appropriate name, Dowson, with a selection of whose work this anthology ends. With the many poets who fill the gap between Crabbe and Dowson, I have attempted to deal as fairly as possible, irrespective of passing fashions, which temporarily cast a shadow over the greatest names. For though an anthology mirrors most clearly the sympathies and

PREFACE

antipathies of its editor, yet in spite of these limitations, it must always owe something to the composite taste of other critics. Vague as this may seem as a criterion, it does serve as a kind of check to prevent an editor from allotting, say, one page to Keats and ten to Beddoes. An anthology, after all, must, first and last and at all times tempt the reader to fall in love with poetry and enjoy it for its own sake. It need have no other nor better aim than this, which is the one I tried to keep before me while I was making mine.

JOHN HAYWARD

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GEORGE CRABBE

1754-1832

Peter Grimes

THUS by himself compell'd to live each day,
To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;
At the same times the same dull views to see,
The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
The water only, when the tides were high,
When low, the mud half-cover'd and half-dry;
The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.

When tides were neap, and, in the sultry day,
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
Which on each side rose swelling, and below
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping muscles, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood;—
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crooked race;
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;
What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,

GEORGE CRABBE

Gave from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom;
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sadd'ning sound;
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief, and fear.

THE BOROUGH. THE POOR

James Kindred's Household

Fix'd were their habits; they arose betimes,
Then pray'd their hour, and sang their party-rhymes:
Their meals were plenteous, regular, and plain;
The trade of Jonas brought him constant gain;
Vender of hops and malt, of coals and corn—
And, like his father, he was merchant born:
Neat was their house; each table, chair, and stool,
Stood in its place, or moving moved by rule;
No lively print or picture graced the room;
A plain brown paper lent its decent gloom;
But here the eye, in glancing round, survey'd
A small recess that seem'd for china made;
Such pleasing pictures seem'd this pencill'd ware,
That few would search for nobler objects there—
Yet, turn'd by chosen friends, and there appear'd
His stern, strong features, whom they all revered;
For there in lofty air was seen to stand
The bold protector of the conquer'd land;

GEORGE CRABBE

Drawn in that look with which he wept and swore,
Turn'd out the members, and made fast the door,
Ridding the house of every knave and drone,
Forced, though it grieved his soul, to rule alone.
The stern still smile each friend approving gave,
Then turn'd the view, and all again were grave.

There stood a clock, though small the owner's need,
For habit told when all things should proceed;
Few their amusements, but when friends appear'd,
They with the world's distress their spirits cheer'd;
The nation's guilt, that would not long endure
The reign of men so modest and so pure:
Their town was large, and seldom pass'd a day
But some had fail'd, and others gone astray;
Clerks had absconded, wives eloped, girls flown
To Gretna-Green, or sons rebellious grown;
Quarrels and fires arose;—and it was plain
The times were bad; the saints had ceased to
reign!

A few yet lived to languish and to mourn
For good old manners never to return.

TALES. THE FRANK COURTSHIP

Dorothea

AND now, her education all complete,
She talk'd of virtuous love and union sweet;
She was indeed by no soft passion moved,
But wish'd, with all her soul, to be beloved.

GEORGE CRABBE

Here on the favour'd beauty fortune smiled;
Her chosen husband was a man so mild,
So humbly temper'd, so intent to please,
It quite distress'd her to remain at ease,
Without a cause to sigh, without pretence to tease:
She tried his patience in a thousand modes,
And tired it not upon the roughest roads.
Pleasure she sought, and, disappointed, sigh'd
For joys, she said, 'to her alone denied;'—
And she was 'sure her parents, if alive,
Would many comforts for their child contrive:'
The gentle husband bade her name him one;
'No—that,' she answer'd, 'should for her be done;
How could she say what pleasures were around?
But she was certain many might be found.'—
'Would she some sea-port, Weymouth, Scarborough,
grace?'—
'He knew she hated every watering-place:'—
'The town?'—'What! now 'twas empty, joyless, dull?'
—'In winter?'—'No; she liked it worse when full.'
She talk'd of building—'Would she plan a room?'—
'No! she could live, as he desired, in gloom:'
'Call then our friends and neighbours:'—'He might
call,
And they might come and fill his ugly hall;
A noisy vulgar set, he knew she scorn'd them all:'—
'Then might their two dear girls the time employ,
And their improvement yield a solid joy.'—
'Solid indeed! and heavy—oh! the bliss
Of teaching letters to a lisping Miss!'—

GEORGE CRABBE

‘My dear, my gentle Dorothea, say,
Can I oblige you?’—‘You may go away.’

TALES. THE MOTHER

The Pauper's Funeral

Now once again the gloomy scene explore,
Less gloomy now; the bitter hour is o'er,
The man of many sorrows sighs no more.—
Up yonder hill, behold how sadly slow
The bier moves winding from the vale below;
There lie the happy dead, from trouble free,
And the glad parish pays the frugal fee:
No more, O Death! thy victim starts to hear
Churchwarden stern, or kingly overseer;
No more the farmer claims his humble bow,
Thou art his lord, the best of tyrants thou!

Now to the church behold the mourners come,
Sedately torpid and devoutly dumb;
The village children now their games suspend,
To see the bier that bears their ancient friend;
For he was one in all their idle sport,
And like a monarch ruled their little court;
The pliant bow he form'd, the flying ball,
The bat, the wicket, were his labours all;
Him now they follow to his grave, and stand
Silent and sad, and gazing, hand in hand;
While bending low, their eager eyes explore
The mingled relics of the parish poor:

GEORGE CRABBE

The bell tolls late, the moping owl flies round,
Fear marks the flight and magnifies the sound;
The busy priest, detain'd by weightier care,
Defers his duty till the day of prayer;
And, waiting long, the crowd retire distress'd,
To think a poor man's bones should lie unblest'd.

THE VILLAGE. I

College Life

BUT fix our scholar, and suppose him crown'd
With all the glory gain'd on classic ground;
Suppose the world without a sigh resign'd,
And to his college all his care confined;
Give him all honours that such states allow,
The freshman's terror and the tradesman's bow;
Let his apartments with his taste agree,
And all his views be those he loves to see;
Let him each day behold the savoury treat,
For which he pays not, but is paid to eat;
These joys and glories soon delight no more,
Although withheld, the mind is vex'd and sore;
The honour too is to the place confined,
Abroad they know not each superior mind:
Strangers no *wrangers* in these figures see,
Nor give they worship to a high degree;
Unlike the prophet's is the scholar's case,
His honour all is in his dwelling-place:

GEORGE CRABBE

And there such honours are familiar things;
What is a monarch in a crowd of kings?
Like other sovereigns he's by forms address'd,
By statutes govern'd and with rules oppress'd.

THE BOROUGH. SCHOOLS

The Dejected Lover

THAT evening all in fond discourse was spent,
When the sad lover to his chamber went,
To think on what had past, to grieve and to repent:
Early he rose, and look'd with many a sigh
On the red light that fill'd the eastern sky;
Oft had he stood before, alert and gay,
To hail the glories of the new-born day:
But now dejected, languid, listless, low,
He saw the wind upon the water blow,
And the cold stream curl'd onward as the gale
From the pine-hill blew harshly down the dale;
On the right side the youth a wood survey'd,
With all its dark intensity of shade;
Where the rough wind alone was heard to move,
In this, the pause of nature and of love,
When now the young are rear'd, and when the old,
Lost to the tie, grow negligent and cold—
Far to the left he saw the huts of men,
Half hid in mist, that hung upon the fen;
Before him swallows, gathering for the sea,
Took their short flights, and twitter'd on the lea;

GEORGE CRABBE

And near the bean-sheaf stood, the harvest done,
And slowly blacken'd in the sickly sun;
All these were sad in nature, or they took
Sadness from him, the likeness of his look,
And of his mind—he ponder'd for a while,
Then met his Fanny with a borrow'd smile.

TALES OF THE HALL. XIII

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

The Solitary Reaper

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
So sweetly to reposing bands
Of Travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate'er the theme the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened till I had my fill,
And when I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Lines

*Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on
Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour*

July 13, 1798

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous Forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence, wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love,—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

Catherine Wordsworth

(Died June 4, 1812)

SURPRISED by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The River Duddon

SOLE listener, Duddon! to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound
Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound—
Unfruitful solitudes, that seemed to upbraid
The sun in heaven!—but now, to form a shade
For Thee, green alders have together wound
Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around;
And birch-trees risen in silver colonnade.
And thou hast also tempted here to rise,
'Mid sheltering pines, this Cottage rude and grey;
Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes
Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day
Thy pleased associates:—light as endless May
On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies.

After-Thought

I THOUGHT of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies!
For backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as tow'rd the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent
dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A Violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Passages from 'The Prelude'

I

WISDOM and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud:
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

BOOK I

II

If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine,
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned;
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in herself; even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Naked, as in the presence of her God.
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate:
Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
—Of that external scene which round me lay,
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind; .
How the immortal soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line, .

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,
Around me from among the hazel leaves,
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
The off and on companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head to look if he were there;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

BOOK IV

III

There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

BOOK V

IV

There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love
Then from his couch he starts: and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dew of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.

BOOK VIII

A grove there is whose boughs
Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,
With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides
Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade
Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
In silent beauty on the naked ridge
Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts
In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart:

Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
My mortal course, there will I think on you;
Dying, will cast on you a backward look;
Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)
Doth with the fond remains of his last power
Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

BOOK VIII

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

VI

(Addressed to S. T. Coleridge)

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
To health and joy and pure contentedness;
To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now
Stands single in her only sanctuary;
A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,
Gather afresh, and will have vent again:
My own delights do scarcely seem to me
My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks
Abroad on many nations, are no more
For me that image of pure gladness
Which they were wont to be. Through kindred
scenes,
For purpose, at a time, how different!
Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
On Etna's side: and thou, O flowery field
Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine,
From the first play-time of the infant world

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Kept sacred to restorative delight,
When from afar invoked by anxious love?

BOOK XI

VII

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.—
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,
In common with the children of her love,
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
So neither were complacency, nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through these distracted times; in Nature still
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

BOOK XII

VIII

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed
Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,
Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir:
Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

In my esteem, next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom: or, as lightsome as a bird
Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves,
Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:
And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,
Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths
With long long ways before, by cottage bench,
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

BOOK XIII

IX

There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.

BOOK XIV

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

X

Behold the fields

In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

BOOK XIV

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

The Dreary Change

THE sun upon the Weirclaw Hill,
In Ettrick's vale, is sinking sweet;
The westland wind is hush and still,
The lake lies sleeping at my feet.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Yet not the landscape to mine eye
Bears those bright hues that once it bore;
Though evening, with her richest dye,
Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

With listless look along the plain,
I see Tweed's silver current glide,
And coldly mark the holy fane
Of Melrose rise in ruin'd pride.
The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,—
Are they still such as once they were?
Or is the dreary change in me?

Alas, the warp'd and broken board,
How can it bear the painter's dye!
The harp of strain'd and tuneless chord,
How to the minstrel's skill reply!
To aching eyes each landscape lowers,
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill;
And Araby's or Eden's bowers
Were barren as this moorland hill.

Song from 'The Heart of Midlothian'

PROUD MAISIE is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

‘Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?’
‘When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.’

‘Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?’
‘The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

‘The glow-worm o’er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing,
“Welcome, proud lady.”’

From ‘The Lay of The Last Minstrel’

CALL it not vain; they do not err,
Who say, that when the Poet dies,
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies:
Who say, tall cliff and cavern lone
For the departed Bard make moan;
That mountains weep in crystal rill;
That flowers in tears of balm distil;
Through his lov’d groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks, in deeper groan, reply;

SIR WALTER SCOTT

And rivers teach their rushing wave
To murmur dirges round his grave.

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn
Those things inanimate can mourn;
But that the stream, the wood, the gale,
Is vocal with the plaintive wail
Of those, who, else forgotten long,
Liv'd in the poet's faithful song,
And, with the poet's parting breath,
Whose memory feels a second death.
The Maid's pale shade, who wails her lot,
That love, true love, should be forgot,
From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear
Upon the gentle Minstrel's bier:
The phantom Knight, his glory fled,
Mourns o'er the field he heap'd with dead;
Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
And shrieks along the battle-plain.
The Chief, whose antique crownlet long
Still sparkled in the feudal song,
Now, from the mountain's misty throne,
Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
His ashes undistinguish'd lie,
His place, his power, his memory die:
His groans the lonely caverns fill,
His tears of rage impel the rill:
All mourn the Minstrel's harp unstrung,
Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772-1834

Kubla Khan

IN Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Youth and Age

VERSE, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
 With NATURE, HOPE, and POESY,
 When I was young!
When I was young?—Ah, woeful *WHEN*!
Ah for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly *then* it flashed along:—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Nought cared this Body for wind or weather
When YOUTH and I lived in't together.

FLOWERS are lovely; LOVE is flower-like;
FRIENDSHIP is a sheltering tree;
O the Joys, that came down shower-like,
Of FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, and LIBERTY,
 Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah woeful *ERE*,
Which tells me, YOUTH's no longer here!
O YOUTH! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be, that Thou art gone!
Thy Vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To *make believe*, that thou art gone?
I see these Locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But SPRING-TIDE blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but Thought: so think I will
That YOUTH and I are house-mates still.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
 When we are old:
That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismiss;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome smile,
And tells the jest without the smile.

A Fragment

ENCINCTURED with a twine of leaves,
That leafy twine his only dress!
A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

By moonlight, in a wilderness.
The moon was bright, the air was free,
And fruits and flowers together grew
On many a shrub and many a tree:
And all put on a gentle hue,
Hanging in the shadowy air
Like a picture rich and rare.
It was a climate where, they say,
The night is more belov'd than day.
But who that beauteous Boy beguiled,
That beauteous Boy to linger here?
Alone, by night, a little child,
In place so silent and so wild—
Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

ROBERT SOUTHEY

1774-1843

Corston

As thus I stand beside the murmuring stream
And watch its current, memory here pourtrays
Scenes faintly form'd of half-forgotten days,
Like far-off woodlands by the moon's bright beam
Dimly descried, but lovely. I have worn
Amid these haunts the heavy hours away,
When childhood idled through the Sabbath-day;
Risen to my tasks at winter's earliest morn;
And when the summer twilight darken'd here,

ROBERT SOUTHEY

Thinking of home, and all of heart forlorn,
Have sigh'd and shed in secret many a tear.
Dream-like and indistinct those days appear,
As the faint sounds of this low brooklet, borne
Upon the breeze, reach fitfully the ear.

The Ebb Tide

SLOWLY thy flowing tide
Came in, old Avon! scarcely did mine eyes,
As watchfully I roam'd thy green-wood side,
Perceive its gentle rise.

With many a stroke and strong
The labouring boatmen upward plied their oars,
Yet little way they made, though labouring long
Between thy winding shores.

Now down thine ebbing tide
The unlabour'd boat falls rapidly along;
The solitary helmsman sits to guide,
And sings an idle song.

Now o'er the rocks that lay
So silent late, the shallow current roars;
Fast flow thy waters on their seaward way
Through wider-spreading shores.

Avon! I gaze and know
The lesson emblem'd in thy varying way;

ROBERT SOUTHEY

It speaks of human joys that rise so slow,
So rapidly decay.

Kingdoms which long have stood,
And slow to strength and power attain'd at last,
Thus from the summit of high fortune's flood
They ebb to ruin fast.

Thus like thy flow appears
Time's tardy course to manhood's envied stage;
Alas! how hurryingly the ebbing years
Then hasten to old age!

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

1775-1864

The Maid's Lament

I LOVED him not; and yet now he is gone,
I feel I am alone.
I check'd him while he spoke; yet, could he speak,
Alas! I would not check.
For reasons not to love him once I sought,
And wearied all my thought
To vex myself and him; I now would give
My love, could he but live
Who lately lived for me, and when he found
'Twas vain, in holy ground

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

He hid his face amid the shades of death.

I waste for him my breath

Who wasted his for me; but mine returns,

And this lorn bosom burns

With stifling heat, heaving it up in sleep,

And waking me to weep

Tears that had melted his soft heart: for years

Wept he as bitter tears.

'Merciful God!' such was his latest prayer,

'These may she never share!'

Quieter is his breath, his breast more cold

Than daisies in the mould,

Where children spell, athwart the churchyard gate,

His name and life's brief date.

Pray for him, gentle souls, whoe'er you be,

And, O, pray too for me!

PAST ruin'd Ilion Helen lives,

Alcestis rises from the shades;

Verse calls them forth; 'tis verse that gives

Immortal youth to mortal maids.

Soon shall Oblivion's deepening veil

Hide all the peopled hills you see,

The gay, the proud, while lovers hail

These many summers you and me.

*

THOMAS CAMPBELL

Unheeded falls along the flood
Thy desolate and agèd tree.
Forsaken scene, how like to thee
The fate of unbefriended Worth!
Like thine her fruit dishonoured falls;
Like thee in solitude she calls
A thousand treasures forth.

O silent spirit of the place,
If, lingering with the ruined year,
Thy hoary form and awful face
I yet might watch and worship here—
Thy storm were music to mine ear,
Thy wildest walk a shelter given
Sublimèr thoughts on earth to find,
And share with no unhallowed mind
The majesty of heaven.

The Parrot

THE deep affections of the breast
That Heaven to living things imparts
Are not exclusively possess'd
By human hearts.

A parrot from the Spanish Main,
Full young and early caged, came o'er

THOMAS CAMPBELL

With bright wings to the bleak domain
Of Mulla's shore.

To spicy groves where he had won
His plumage of resplendent hue,
His native fruits and skies and sun,
He bade adieu.

For these he changed the smoke of turf,
A heathery land and misty sky,
And turn'd on rocks and raging surf
His golden eye.

But, petted, in our climate cold
He lived and chatter'd many a day;
Until with age from green and gold
His wings grew gray.

At last, when blind and seeming dumb,
He scolded, laughed, and spoke no more,
A Spanish stranger chanced to come
To Mulla's shore;

He hailed the bird in Spanish speech;
The bird in Spanish speech replied,
Flapped round his cage with joyous screech,
Dropt down, and died.

THOMAS MOORE

1779-1852

At The Mid Hour of Night

AT the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping,
I fly
To the lone vale we loved, when life shone warm in
thine eye;
And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions
of air,
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to
me there,
And tell me our love is remember'd, even in the sky!
Then I sing the wild song 'twas once such a pleasure
to hear,
When our voices, commingling, breathed, like one, on
the ear;
And, as Echo far off through the vale my sad orison
rolls,
I think, O my love! 'tis thy voice, from the King-
dom of Souls,
Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear.

Catalonian Air

PEACE to the slumberers!
They lie on the battle plain,
With no shroud to cover them;
The dew and the summer rain
Are all that weep over them.

THOMAS MOORE

Vain was their bravery!

The fallen oak lies where it lay,
Across the wintry river;

But brave hearts, once swept away
Are gone, alas! for ever.

Woe to the conqueror!

Our limbs shall lie as cold as theirs
Of whom his sword bereft us,

Ere we forget the deep arrears
Of vengeance they have left us!

JAMES LEIGH HUNT

1784-1859

To The

Grasshopper and The Cricket

GREEN little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When ev'n the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;

JAMES LEIGH HUNT

Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are
strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem giv'n to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song—
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

A Thought of The Nile

It flows through old hushed Egypt, and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought, threading a dream,
And times and things, as in th'at vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands,—
Caves, pillars, pyramids, th'ie shepherd bands
That roamed through the young earth, the glory
extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen, that caught the world's great
hands.

Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

JAMES LEIGH HUNT

The Ephydriads

'Tis there the Ephydriads haunt;—there, where a gap
Betwixt a heap of tree-tops, hollow and dun,
Shews where the waters run,
And whence the fountain's tongue begins to lap.
There lie they, lulled by little whiffing tones
Of rills among the stones,
Or by the rounder murmur, fast and flush,
Of the escaping gush,
That laughs and tumbles, like a conscious thing,
For joy of all its future travelling.
The lizard circuits them; and his grave will
The frog, with reckoning leap, enjoys apart,
Till now and then the woodcock frights his heart
With brushing down to dip his dainty bill.
Close by, from bank to bank,
A little bridge there is, a one-railed plank;
And all is woody, mossy, and watery.
Sometimes a poet from that bridge might see
A Nymph reach downwards, holding by a bough
With tresses o'er her brow,
And with her white back stoop
The pushing stream to scoop
In a green gourd cup, shining sunnily.

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

1788-1824

To Ianthe. A Dedication

Nor in those climes where I have late been straying,
Though Beauty long hath there been matchless
deem'd;
Not in those visions to the heart displaying
Forms which it sighs but to have only dream'd,
Hath aught like thee in truth or fancy seem'd:
Nor, having seen thee, shall I vainly seek
To paint those charms which varied as they beam'd—
To such as see thee not my words were weak;
To those who gaze on thee what language could they
speak?

Ah! may'st thou ever be what now thou art,
Nor unbeseem the promise of thy spring,
As fair in form, as warm yet pure in heart,
Love's image upon earth without his wing,
And guileless beyond Hope's imagining!
And surely she who now so fondly rears
Thy youth, in thee, thus hourly brightening,
Beholds the rainbow of her future years,
Before whose heavenly hues all sorrow disappears.

Young Peri of the West!—'tis well for me
My years already doubly number thine;
My loveless eye unmoved may gaze on thee,
And safely view thy ripening beauties shine;
Happy, I ne'er shall see them in decline;

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Happier, that while all younger hearts shall bleed,
Mine shall escape the doom thine eyes assign
To those whose admiration shall succeed,
But mix'd with pangs to Love's even loveliest hours
decreed.

Oh! let that eye, which, wild as the Gazelle's
Now brightly bold or beautifully shy,
Wins as it wanders, dazzles where it dwells,
Glance o'er this page, nor to my verse deny
That smile for which my breast might vainly sigh,
Could I to thee be ever more than friend:
This much, dear maid, accord: nor question why
To one so young my strain I would commend,
But bid me with my wreath one matchless lily blend.

Such is thy name with this my verse entwined;
And long as kinder eyes a look shall cast
On Harold's page, Ianthe's here enshrined
Shall thus be first beheld, forgotten last:
My days once number'd, should this homage past
Attract thy fairy fingers near the lyre
Of him who hail'd thee, loveliest as thou wast,
Such is the most my memory may desire;
Though more than Hope can claim, could Friendship
less require?

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

The Curse of Minerva

[*Extract*]

SLOW sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
Along Morea's hills the setting sun;
Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light;
O'er the hush'd deep the yellow beam he throws,
Gilds the green wave that trembles as it glows;
On old Ægina's rock and Hydra's isle
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile;
O'er his own regions lingering loves to shine,
Though there his altars are no more divine.
Descending fast, the mountain-shadows kiss
Thy glorious gulf, unconquer'd Salamis!
Their azure arches through the long expanse,
More deeply purpled, meet his mellowing glance,
And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven;
Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,
Behind his Delphian rock he sinks to sleep.

On such an eve his palest beam he cast
When, Athens! here thy wisest look'd his last.
How watch'd thy better sons his farewell ray,
That closed their murder'd sage's latest day!
Not yet—not yet—Sol pauses on the hill,
The precious hour of parting lingers still;
But sad his light to agonising eyes,
And dark the mountain's once delightful dyes;

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Gloom o'er the lovely land he seem'd to pour,
The land where Phœbus never frown'd before;
But ere he sunk below Citheron's head,
The cup of woe was quaff'd—the spirit fled;
The soul of him that scorn'd to fear or fly,
Who lived and died as none can live or die.

But, lo! from high Hymettus to the plain
The queen of night asserts her silent reign;
No murky vapour, herald of the storm,
Hides her fair face, or girds her glowing form.
With cornice glimmering as the moonbeams play,
There the white column greets her grateful ray,
And bright around, with quivering beams beset,
Her emblem sparkles o'er the minaret:
The groves of olive scatter'd dark and wide,
Where meek Cephissus sheds his scanty tide,
The cypress saddening by the sacred mosque,
The gleaming turret of the gay kiosk,
And sad and sombre mid the holy calm,
Near Theseus' fane, yon solitary palm;
All, tinged with varied hues, arrest the eye;
And dull were his that pass'd them heedless by.

Stanzas to Lady Wilmot Horton

SHE walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face:
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Greece

THIS must he feel, the true-born son of Greece,
If Greece one true-born patriot still can boast:
Not such as prate of war, but skulk in peace,
The bondsman's peace, who sighs for all he lost,
Yet with smooth smile his tyrant can accost,
And wield the slavish sickle, not the sword:
Ah! Greece! they love thee least who owe thee
most;
Their birth, their blood, and that sublime record
Of hero sires, who shame thy now degenerate horde!

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

When riseth Lacedemon's hardihood,
When Thebes Epaminondas rears again,
When Athens' children are with hearts endued,
When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men,
Then may'st thou be restored; but not till then
A thousand years scarce serve to form a state;
An hour may lay it in the dust: and when
Can man its shatter'd splendour renovate,
Recall its virtues back, and vanquish Time and Fate?

And yet how lovely in thine age of woe,
Land of lost gods and godlike men! art thou!
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow,
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favourite now;
Thy fanes, thy temples to thy surface bow,
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,
Broke by the share of every rustic plough:
So perish monuments of mortal birth,
So perish all in turn, save well-recorded Worth;

Save where some solitary column mourns
Above its prostrate brethren of the cave
Save where Tritonia's airy shrine adorns
Colonna's cliff, and gleams along the wave;
Save o'er some warrior's half-forgotten grave,
Where the gray stones and unmolested grass
Ages, but not oblivion, feebly brave,
While strangers only not regardless pass,
Lingering like me, perchance, to gaze, and sigh "Alas!"

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
And still his honied wealth Hymettus yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain-air;
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground,
No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mould,
But one vast realm of wonder spreads around,
And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,
Till the sense aches with gazing to behold
The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon:
Each hill and dale, each deepening glen and wold
Defies the power which crush'd thy temples gone:
Age shakes Athena's tower, but spares gray Marathon.

The sun, the soil, but not the slave, the same;
Unchanged in all except its foreign lord—
Preserves alike its bounds and boundless fame
The Battle-field, where Persia's victim horde
First bow'd beneath the brunt of Hellas' sword,
As on the morn to distant Glory dear,
When Marathon became a magic word;
Which utter'd, to the hearer's eye appear
The camp, the host, the fight, the conqueror's career,

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

The flying Mede, his shaftless broken bow;
The fiery Greek, his red pursuing spear;
Mountains above, Earth's, Ocean's plain below;
Death in the front, Destruction in the rear!
Such was the scene—what now remaineth here?
What sacred trophy marks the hallow'd ground,
Recording Freedom's smile and Asia's tear?
The rifled urn, the violated mound,
The dust thy courser's hoof, rude stranger! spurns
around.

Yet to the remnants of thy splendour past
Shall pilgrims, pensive, but unwearied, throng;
Long shall the voyager, with th' Ionian blast,
Hail the bright clime of battle and of song;
Long shall thine annals and immortal tongue
Fill with thy fame the youth of many a shore;
Boast of the aged! lesson of the young!
Which sages venerate and bards adore,
As Pallas and the Muse unveil their awful lore.

The parted bosom clings to wonted home,
If aught that's kindred cheer the welcome hearth;
He that is lonely, hither let him roam,
And gaze complacent on congenial earth.
Greece is no lightsome land of social mirth:
But he whom Sadness sootheth may abide,
And scarce regret the region of his birth,
When wandering slow by Delphi's sacred side,
Or gazing o'er the plains where Greek and Persian died.

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Let such approach this consecrated land,
And pass in peace along the magic waste;
But spare its relics—let no busy hand
Deface the scenes, already how defaced!
Not for such purpose were these altars placed:
Revere the remnants nations once revered:
So may our country's name be undisgraced,
So may'st thou prosper where thy youth was rear'd,
By every honest joy of love and life endear'd!

For thee, who thus in too protracted song
Hast soothed thine idlesse with inglorious lays,
Soon shall thy voice be lost amid the throng
Of louder minstrels in these later days:
To such resign the strife for fading bays—
Ill may such contest now the spirit move
Which heeds nor keen reproach nor partial praise;
Since cold each kinder heart that might approve,
And none are left to please when none are left to love.

Thou too art gone, thou loved and lovely one!
Whom youth and youth's affections bound to me;
Who did for me what none beside have done,
Nor shrank from one albeit unworthy thee.
What is my being? thou hast ceased to be!
Nor staid to welcome here thy wanderer home,
Who mourns o'er hours which we no more shall
see—

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Would they had never been, or were to come!
Would he had ne'er return'd to find fresh cause to roam!

Oh! ever loving, lovely, and beloved!
How selfish Sorrow ponders on the past,
And clings to thoughts now better far removed!
But Time shall tear thy shadow from me last.
All thou couldst have of mine, stern Death! thou
hast;
The parent, friend, and now the more than friend:
Ne'er yet for one thine arrows flew so fast,
And grief with grief continuing still to blend,
Hath snatch'd the little joy that life had yet to lend.

Then must I plunge again into the crowd,
And follow all that Peace disdains to seek?
Where Revel calls, and Laughter, vainly loud,
False to the heart, distorts the hollow cheek,
To leave the flagging spirit doubly weak;
Still o'er the features, which perforce they cheer
To feign the pleasure or conceal the pique;
Smiles from the channel of a future tear,
Or raise the writhing lip with ill-dissembled sneer.

What is the worst of woes that wait on age?
What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?
To view each loved one blotted from life's page,
And be alone on earth, as I am now.
Before the Chastener humbly let me bow,

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

O'er hearts divided and o'er hopes destroy'd:
Roll on, vain days! full reckless may ye flow,
Since Time hath reft whate'er my soul enjoy'd,
And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

The Eve of Waterloo

THERE was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

' Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But, hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blush'd at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise!

And there was mounting in hot haste: the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;
While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe! They
come! they come!"

And wild and high the "Cameron's gathering" rose!
The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's hills
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,
And Evan's, Donald's fame rings in each clansman's
ears!

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with nature's tear-drops, as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valour, rolling on the foe
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and
low.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
Battle's magnificently-stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent!

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

When We Two Parted

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
With silence and tears.

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

So, we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

JOHN KEBLE

1792-1866

Forest Leaves in Autumn

[*Extract*]

RED o'er the forest peers the setting sun,
The line of yellow light dies fast away
That crowned the eastern copse: and chill and dun
Falls on the moor the brief November day.

Now the tired hunter winds a parting note,
And Echo bids good-night from every glade;
Yet wait awhile, and see the calm leaves float
Each to his rest beneath their parent shade.

JOHN KEBLE

How like decaying life they seem to glide!
And yet no second spring have they in store,
But where they fall, forgotten to abide
Is all their portion, and they ask no more.

Soon o'er their heads blithe April airs shall sing,
A thousand wild-flowers round them shall unfold,
The green buds glisten in the dews of Spring,
And all be vernal rapture as of old.

Unconscious they in waste oblivion lie,
In all the world of busy life around
No thought of them; in all the bounteous sky
No drop, for them, of kindly influence found.

Man's portion is to die and rise again—
Yet he complains, while these un murmuring part
With their sweet lives, as pure from sin and stain
As his when Eden held his virgin heart.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

1792-1822

Ode to the West Wind

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone.
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Hymn of Pan

FROM the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The winds in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass.
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was
Listening to my sweet pipings.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Speeded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and the waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars.
I sang of the daedal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Maenalus
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed.
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus!
It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

Mutability

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

To Night

SWIFTLY walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sigh'd for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
'Wouldst thou me?'
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
'Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?'—And I replied,
'No, not thee!'

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

On Fanny Godwin

HER voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery—O Misery,
This world is all too wide for thee.

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

I

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

II

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

III

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to
sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

IV

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came.
Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is
fed;
I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

VI

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned
bowers

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

VII

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

Prometheus Unbound

Semichorus I of Spirits

THE path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
 Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
 Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

Semichorus II

There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
 And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,

PERCH BYSSHE SHELLEY

Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

Semichorus I

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw:
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,—
Attracts, impels them; those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey:
And so they float upon their way,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
 Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
 Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

Chorus from Hellas

THE world's great age begins anew,
 The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
 From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
 Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

JOHN CLARE

1793-1864

Summer Images

Now swarthy summer, by rude health embrowned,
Precedence takes of rosy fingered spring;
And laughing joy, with wild flowers pranked and
crowned,
A wild and giddy thing,
And health robust, from every care unbound,
Come on the zephyr's wing,
And cheer the toiling clown.

Happy as holiday-enjoying face,
Loud tongued, and "merry as a marriage bell,"
Thy lightsome step sheds joy in every place;
And where the troubled dwell,
Thy witching smiles wean them of half their cares;
And from thy sunny spell,
They greet joy unawares.

Then with thy sultry locks all loose and rude,
And mantle laced with gems of garish light,
Come as of wont; for I would fain intrude,
And in the world's despite,
Share the rude mirth that thy own heart beguiles;
If haply so I might
Win pleasure from thy smiles.

Me not the noise of brawling pleasure cheers,
In nightly revels or in city streets;

JOHN CLARE

But joys which soothe, and not distract the ears,
That one at leisure meets
In the green woods, and meadows summer-shorn,
Or fields, where bee-fly greets
The ears with mellow horn.

The green-swathed grasshopper, on treble pipe,
Sings there, and dances, in mad-hearted pranks;
There bees go courting every flower that's ripe,
On baulks and sunny banks;
And droning dragon-fly, on rude bassoon,
Attempts to give God thanks
In no discordant tune.

There speckled thrush, by self-delight embued,
There sings unto himself for joy's amends,
And drinks the honey dew of solitude.
There happiness attends
With inbred joy until the heart oerflow,
Of which the world's rude friends,
Nought heeding, nothing know.

There the gay river, laughing as it goes,
Plashes with easy wave its flaggy sides,
And to the calm of heart, in calmness shows
What pleasure there abides,
To trace its sedgy banks, from trouble free:
Spots solitude provides
To muse, and happy be.

JOHN CLARE

There ruminating neath some pleasant bush,
On sweet silk grass I stretch me at mine ease,
Where I can pillow on the yielding rush;
And, acting as I please,
Drop into pleasant dreams; or musing lie,
Mark the wind-shaken trees,
And cloud-betravelled sky.

And think me how some barter joy for care,
And waste life's summer-health in riot rude,
Of nature, nor of nature's sweets aware;
Where passions vain and rude
By calm reflection, softened are and still:
And the heart's better mood
Feels sick of doing ill.

There I can live, and at my leisure seek
Joys far from cold restraints—not fearing pride—
Free as the winds, that breathe upon my cheek
Rude health, so long denied.
Here poor integrity can sit at ease,
And list self-satisfied
The song of honey-bees;

And green lane traverse heedless where it goes
Nought guessing, till some sudden turn espies
Rude battered finger post, that stooping shows
Where the snug mystery lies;
And then a mossy spire, with ivy crown,
Clears up the short surprise,
And shows a peeping town.

JOHN CLARE

I see the wild flowers, in their summer morn
Of beauty, feeding on joy's luscious hours;
The gay convolvulus, wreathing round the thorn,
Agape for honey showers;
And slender kingcup, burnished with the dew
Of morning's early hours,
Like gold yminted new;

And mark by rustic bridge, oer shallow stream,
Cow-tending boy, to toil unreconciled,
Absorbed as in some vagrant summer dream;
Who now, in gestures wild,
Starts dancing to his shadow on the wall,
Feeling self-gratified,
Nor fearing human thrall:

Then thread the sunny valley laced with streams,
Or forests rude, and the oershadowed brims
Of simple ponds, where idle shepherd dreams,
And streaks his listless limbs;
Or trace hay-scented meadows, smooth and long,
Where joy's wild impulse swims
In one continued song.

I love at early morn, from new mown swath,
To see the startled frog his route pursue;
To mark while, leaping oer the dripping path,
His bright sides scatter dew,
The early lark that, from its bustle flies,
To hail his matin new;
And watch him to the skies:

JOHN CLARE

To note on hedgerow baulks, in moisture sprent,
The jetty snail creep from the mossy thorn,
With earnest heed, and tremulous intent,
Frail brother of the morn,
That from the tiny bents and misted leaves
Withdraws his timid horn,
And fearful vision weaves:

Or swallow heed on smoke-tanned chimney top,
Wont to be first unsealing morning's eye,
Ere yet the bee hath gleaned one wayward drop
Of honey on his thigh;
To see him seek morn's airy couch to sing,
Until the golden sky
Bepaint his russet wing:

And sawning boy by tanning corn espy,
With clapping noise to startle birds away,
And hear him bawl to every passer by
To know the hour of day;
And see the uncradled breeze, refreshed and strong,
With waking blossoms play,
And breathe eolian song.

I love the south-west wind, or low or loud,
And not the less when sudden drops of rain
Moisten my pallid cheek from ebon cloud,
Threatening soft showers again,
That over lands new ploughed and meadow grounds,
Summer's sweet breath unchain,
And wake harmonious sounds.

JOHN CLARE

Rich music breathes in summer's every sound;
And in her harmony of varied greens,
Woods, meadows, hedge-rows, corn-fields, all around
Much beauty intervenes,
Filling with harmony the ear and eye;
While oer the mingling scenes
Far spreads the laughing sky.

And wind-enamoured aspin—mark the leaves
Turn up their silver lining to the sun,
And list! the brustling noise, that oft deceives,
And makes the sheep-boy run:
The sound so mimics fast-approaching showers,
He thinks the rain begun,
And hastes to sheltering bowers.

But now the evening curdles dank and grey,
Changing her watchet hue for sombre weed;
And moping owls, to close the lids of day,
On drowsy wing proceed;
While chickering crickets, tremulous and long,
Light's farewell inly heed,
And give it parting song.

The pranking bat its flighty circlet makes;
The glow-worm burnishes its lamp anew
Oer meadows dew-besprent; and beetle wakes
Enquiries ever new,
Teazing each passing ear with murmurs vain,
As wanting to pursue
His homeward path again.

JOHN CLARE

Hark to the melody of distant bells
That on the wind with pleasing hum rebounds
By fitful starts, then musically swells
O'er the dun stilly grounds;
While on the meadow bridge the pausing boy
Listens the mellow sounds,
And hums in vacant joy.

Now homeward-bound, the hedger bundles round
His evening faggot, and with every stride
His leathern doublet leaves a rustling sound.
Till silly sheep beside
His path start tremulous, and once again
Look back dissatisfied,
Then scour the dewy plain.

How sweet the soothing calm that smoothly stills
O'er the heart's every sense its opiate dews,
In meek eyed moods and ever balmy trills!
That softens and subdues,
With gentle quiet's bland and sober train,
Which dreamy eve renews
In many a mellow strain.

I love to walk the fields, they are to me
A legacy no evil can destroy;
They, like a spell, set every rapture free
That cheered me when a boy.
Play—pastime—all time's blotting pen concealed,
Comes like a new-born joy,
To greet me in the field.

JOHN CLARE

For nature's objects ever harmonize
With emulous taste, that vulgar deed annoys;
It loves in quiet moods to sympathize,
And meet vibrating joys
O'er nature's pleasant things; nor will it deem
Pastime the muse employs
A vain obtrusive theme.

The Sleep of Spring

O FOR that sweet, untroubled rest
That poets oft have sung!—
The babe upon its mother's breast,
The bird upon its young,
The heart asleep without a pain—
When shall I know that sleep again?

When shall I be as I have been
Upon my mother's breast
Sweet Nature's garb of verdant green
To woo to perfect rest—
Love in the meadow, field, and glen,
And in my native wilds again?

The sheep within the fallow field,
The herd upon the green,
The larks that in the thistle shield,
And pipe from morn to e'en—
O for the pasture, fields, and fen!
When shall I see such rest again?

JOHN CLARE

I love the weeds along the fen,
 More sweet than garden flowers,
For freedom haunts the humble glen
 That blest my happiest hours.
Here prison injures health and me:
I love sweet freedom and the free.

The crows upon the swelling hills,
 The cows upon the lea,
Sheep feeding by the pasture rills,
 Are ever dear to me,
Because sweet freedom is their mate,
While I am lone and desolate.

I loved the winds when I was young,
 When life was dear to me;
I loved the song which Nature sung,
 Endearing liberty;
I loved the wood, the vale, the stream,
For there my boyhood used to dream.

There even toil itself was play;
 'Twas pleasure e'en to weep;
'Twas joy to think of dreams by day,
 The beautiful of sleep.
When shall I see the wood and plain,
And dream those happy dreams again?

JOHN CLARE

Love Lives Beyond the Tomb

LOVE lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, which fades like dew!
I love the fond,
The faithful, and the true.

Love lives in sleep,
The happiness of healthy dreams:
Eve's dew may weep,
But love delightful seems.

Tis seen in flowers,
And in the morning's pearly dew;
In earth's green hours,
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

Tis heard in Spring
When light and sunbeams, warm and kind,
On angel's wing
Bring love and music to the mind.

And where is voice,
So young, so beautiful, and sweet
As Nature's choice,
Where Spring and lovers meet?

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, the flowers, and dew
I love the fond,
The faithful, young and true.

JOHN CLARE

I Am

I AM: yet what I am none cares or knows,
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self-consumer of my woes,
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am, and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smiled or wept;
There to abide with my Creator, GOD,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

Ode to Psyche

O GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung

JOHN KEATS

Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aureorean love:
The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;

JOHN KEATS

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swung censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant
pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;

JOHN KEATS

And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same.
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
 That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in!

Ode on A Grecian Urn

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens
 loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

II

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

JOHN KEATS

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

III

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

JOHN KEATS

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

II

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

III

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

JOHN KEATS

Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

To Leigh Hunt. A Dedication

GLORY and loveliness have pass'd away;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see upborne
Into the east, to meet the smiling day:
No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time, when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

JOHN KEATS

The Eve of Saint Mark

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window panes,
The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and pious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arched porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceas'd, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,

JOHN KEATS

Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broideries;
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints in silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in the old Minster-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leav'd, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she try'd, and then again,
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
She lifted up her soft warm chin,

JOHN KEATS

With aching neck and swimming eyes,
And daz'd with saintly imageries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.

The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music of the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room:
Down she sat, poor cheated soul!
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal;
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.
Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square;
And the warm angled winter screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,

JOHN KEATS

Macaw, and tender Avadavat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untir'd she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
Untir'd she read the legend page,
Of holy Mark, from youth to age,
On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
Rejoicing for his many pains.
Sometimes the learned eremite,
With golden star, or dagger bright,
Referr'd to pious poesies
Written in smallest crow-quill size
Beneath the text; and thus the rhyme
Was parcell'd out from time to time:
—"Als writith he of swevenis,
Men han beforne they wake in bliss,
Whanne that hir friendes thinke hem bound
In crimped shroude farre under grounde;
And how a litling child mote be
A saint er its nativitie,
Gif that the modre (God her blesse!)
Kepen in solitarinesse,
And kissen devoute the holy croce.
Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—
He writith; and thinges many mo:
Of swiche thinges I may not show.

JOHN KEATS

Bot I must tellen verilie
Somdel of Saintè Cicilie,
And chieflie what he auctorethe
Of Saintè Markis life and dethe.' . . .

Hyperion

[*Extract*]

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

JOHN KEATS

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian Sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain:
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!

JOHN KEATS

Saturn, look up!—though wherefore, poor old King?
“I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
“I cannot say, ‘O wherefore sleepest thou?’
“For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
“Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
“And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
“Has from thy sceptre pass’d; and all the air
“Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
“Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
“Rumbles reluctant o’er our fallen house;
“And thy sharp lightning in unpractis’d hands
“Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
“O aching time! O moments big as years!
“All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
“And press it so upon our weary griefs
“That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
“Saturn, sleep on:—O thoughtless, why did I
“Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
“Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
“Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep.”

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob’d senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave:
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She touch’d her fair large forehead to the ground,

JOHN KEATS

Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess. . . .

*Written on a Blank Page in Shakespeare's Poems
facing "A Lover's Complaint"*

BRIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

GEORGE DARLEY

1795-1846

From 'Nepenthe'

BE mute, ye summer airs around!
Let not a sigh disturb the sound
That like a shadow climbs the steepy ground
Up from blue Helle's dim profound!
Listen! the roar
Creeps on the ear as on a little shore,
And by degrees
Swells like the rushing sound of many seas,
And now as loud upon the brain doth beat
As Helle's tide in thunderbursts broke foaming at my
feet!

Hist! ho!—the Spirit sings
While in the cradle of the surge he swings,
Or falling down its sheeted laps,
Speaks to it in thunder-claps
Terrifical, half-suffocated things!
For ever with his furious breath
Keeping a watery storm beneath
Where'er he sinks, that o'er him seethe
The frothy salt-sea surfaces
Dissolving with an icy hiss,
As if the marvellous flood did flow
Over a quenchless fire below!
Hist! ho! the Spirit sings!

GEORGE DARLEY

In the caves of the deep—lost Youth! lost Youth!—
O'er and o'er, fleeting billows! fleeting billows!—
Rung to his restless everlasting sleep
By the heavy death-bells of the deep,
Under the slimy-dropping sea-green willows,
 Poor Youth! lost Youth!
 Laying his dolorous head, forsooth,
 On Carian reefs uncouth—
 Poor Youth!
On the wild sand's ever-shifting pillows!

In the foam's cold shroud—lost Youth! lost Youth!—
And the lithe waterweed swathing round him!—
Mocked by the surges roaring o'er him loud,
“Will the sun-seeker freeze in his shroud,
Aye, where the deep-wheeling eddy has wound him?”
 Lost Youth! poor Youth!
 Vail him his Daedalian wings, in truth?
 Stretched there without all ruth—
 Poor Youth!—
Weeping fresh torrents into those that drowned him!

GEORGE DARLEY

The Unicorn

Lo! in the mute mid wilderness,
What wondrous Creature, of no kind,
His burning lair doth largely press,
Gaze fixt, and feeding on the wind?
His fell is of the desert dye,
And tissue adust, dun-yellow and dry,
Compact of living sands; his eye
Black luminary, soft and mild,
With its dark lustre cools the wild.
From his stately forehead springs,
Piercing to heaven, a radiant horn!
Lo, the compeer of lion-kings,
The steed self-armed, the Unicorn!
Ever heard of, never seen,
With a main of sands between
Him and approach; his lonely pride
To course his arid arena wide,
Free as the hurricane, or lie here,
Lord of his couch as his career!
Wherefore should this foot profane
His sanctuary, still domain?
Let me turn, ere eye so bland
Perchance be fire-shot, like heaven's brand,
To wither my boldness! Northward now,
Behind the white star on his brow
Glittering straight against the Sun
Far athwart his lair I run.

NEPENTHE

GEORGE DARLEY

Serenade of A Loyal Martyr

SWEET in her green cell the Flower of Beauty slumbers
Lulled by the faint breezes sighing thro' her hair;
Sleeps she, and hears not the melancholy numbers
Breathed to my sad lute amid the lonely air?

Down from the high cliffs the rivulet is teeming
To wind round the willow banks that lure him from
above:

O that in tears from my rocky prison streaming,
I too could glide to the bower of my love!

Ah! where the woodbines with sleepy arms have
wound her,

Opes she her eyelids at the dream of my lay,
Listening like the dove, while the fountains echo
round her,

To her lost mate's call in the forests far away?

Come, then, my Bird!—for the peace thou ever
bearest,

Still heaven's messenger of comfort to me,
Come!—this fond bosom, my faithfullest, my fairest!
Bleeds with its death-wound, but deeper yet for thee.

GEORGE DARLEY

Last Night

I SAT with one I love last night,
She sang to me an olden strain;
In former times it woke delight,
 Last night—but pain.

Last night we saw the stars arise,
But clouds soon dimm'd the ether blue:
And when we sought each other's eyes
 Tears dimm'd them too!

We paced alone our fav'rite walk
But paced in silence broken-hearted:
Of old we used to smile and talk.
 Last night—we parted.

THOMAS HOOD

1799-1845

To ———

STILL glides the gentle streamlet on,
With shifting current new and strange;
The water that was here is gone,
But those green shadows never change.

Serene or ruffled by the storm,
On present waves, as on the past,

THOMAS HOOD

The mirror'd grove retains its form.
The self-same trees their semblance cast.

The hue each fleeting globule wears,
That drop bequeaths it to the next:
One picture still the surface bears,
To illustrate the murmur'd text.

So, love, however time may flow,
Fresh hours pursuing those that flee,
One constant image still shall show
My tide of life is true to thee.

Silence

THERE is a silence where hath been no sound;
There is a silence where no sound may be,
In the cold grave—under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound
No voice is hushed—no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground:
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
Though the dun fox, or wild hyæna, calls,
And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

THOMAS HOOD

Time, Hope, and Memory

I HEARD a gentle maiden, in the spring,
Set her sweet sighs to music, and thus sing:
"Fly through the world, and I will follow thee,
Only for looks that may turn back on me;

Only for roses that your chance may throw—
Though wither'd—I will wear them on my brow,
To be a thoughtful fragrance to my brain;
Warm'd with such love, that they will bloom again.

Thy love before thee, I must tread behind,
Kissing thy foot-prints, though to me unkind;
But trust not all her fondness, though it seem,
Lest thy true love should rest on a false dream.

Her face is smiling, and her voice is sweet;
But smiles betray, and music sings deceit;
And words speak false;—yet, if they welcome prove,
I'll be their echo, and repeat their love.

Only if waken'd to sad truth, at last,
The bitterness to come, and sweetness past;
When thou art vexed, then, turn again, and see
Thou hast lov'd Hope, but Memory lov'd thee."

THOMAS HOOD

Sonnet

It is not death, that sometime in a sigh
This eloquent breath shall take its speechless flight;
That sometime these bright stars, that now reply
In sunlight to the sun, shall set in night;
That this warm conscious flesh shall perish quite,
And all life's ruddy springs forget to flow;
That thoughts shall cease, and the immortal spright
Be lapp'd in alien clay and laid below;
It is not death to know this,—but to know
That pious thoughts, which visit at new graves
In tender pilgrimage, will cease to go
So duly and so oft,—and when grass waves
Over the past-away, there may be then
No resurrection in the minds of men.

The Death-bed

WE watch'd her breathing thro' the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seem'd to speak,
So slowly mov'd about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.

THOMAS HOOD

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids clos'd—she had
Another morn than ours.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

1803-1849

Song for Amala

WE have bathed, where none have seen us,
In the lake and in the fountain,
Underneath the charmed statue
Of the timid, bending Venus,
When the water-nymphs were countin'
In the waves the stars of night,
And those maidens started at you,
Your limbs shone through so soft and bright.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Waits to try thy beauty's spell.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

We have crowned thee queen of women,
Since love's love, the rose, hath kept her
Court within thy lips and blushes,
And thine eye, in beauty swimming,
Kissing, we rendered up the sceptre,
At whose touch the startled soul
Like an ocean bounds and gushes,
And spirits bend at thy control.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Is at hand, and so farewell.

THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY

Dream-Pedlary

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell;
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rung the bell,
What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down,
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

But there were dreams to sell
Ill didst thou buy;
Life is a dream, they tell,
Waking, to die.
Dreaming a dream to prize,
Is wishing ghosts to rise;
And, if I had the spell
To call the buried well,
Which one would I?

If there are ghosts to raise,
What shall I call,
Out of hell's murky haze,
Heaven's blue pall?
Raise my loved long-lost boy
To lead me to his joy.
There are no ghosts to raise;
Out of death lead no ways;
Vain is the call.

Know'st thou not ghosts to sue?
No love thou hast.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

Else lie, as I will do,
And breathe thy last.
So out of Life's fresh crown
Fall like a rose-leaf down.
Thus are the ghosts to woo;
Thus are all dreams made true,
Ever to last!

A Voice from the Waters

THE swallow leaves her nest,
The soul my weary breast;
But therefore let the rain
On my grave
Fall pure; for why complain?
Since both will come again
O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow
Doth hurry to and fro;
And, once, a day shall break
O'er the wave,
When a storm of ghosts shall shake
The dead, until they wake
In the grave.

DEATH'S JEST BOOK

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

Dirge

WE do lie beneath the grass
In the moonlight, in the shade
Of the yew-tree. They that pass
Hear us not. We are afraid
They would envy our delight,
In our graves by glow-worm night.
Come follow us, and smile as we;
We sail to the rock in the ancient waves,
Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
And the drowned and the shipwrecked have
happy graves.

THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY

Envoi

[*Extract*]

WHO findeth comfort in the stars and flowers
Apparelling the earth and evening sky,
That moralize throughout their silent hours,
And woo us heaven-wards till we wish to die;
Oft hath he singled from the soothing quire,
For its calm influence, one of softest charm
To still his bosom's pangs, when they desire
A solace for the world's remorseless harm.
Yet they, since to be beautiful and bless
Is but their way of life, will still remain
Cupbearers to the bee in humbleness,

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

Or look untouched down through the moony rain,
Living and being worlds in bright content,
Ignorant, not in scorn, of his affection's bent.

THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

1806-1861

Grief

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,
In souls as countries lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

The Mask

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold;
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled:
And what now will you say?—she said.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile.
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile,
God's pity let us pray, she said.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse:
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

How calmly, calmly smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear;
'Tis bought with pangs long nourished,
And rounded to despair:
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

Sonnets from the Portuguese

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
“Guess now who holds thee,”—“Death,”

I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang,—“Not Death, but Love.”

II

If thou must love me, let it be for naught
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
“I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day”—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

III

Belovèd, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and
bowers

Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not
pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

FREDERICK TENNYSON

1807–1898

The Glory of Nature

If only once the chariot of the Morn
Had scatter'd from its wheels the twilight dun,
But once the unimaginable Sun
Flash'd godlike thro' perennial clouds forlorn,
And shown us Beauty for a moment born;

If only once blind eyes had seen the Spring,
Waking amid the triumphs of midnoon;
But once had seen the lovely Summer boon
Pass by in state like a full-robed King,
The waters dance, the woodlands laugh and sing;

FREDERICK TENNYSON

If only once deaf ears had heard the joy
Of the wild birds, or morning breezes blowing,
Or silver fountains from their caverns flowing,
Or the deep-voiced rivers rolling by;
Then Night eternal fallen from the sky;

If only once weird Time had rent asunder
The curtain of the Clouds, and shown us Night
Climbing into the awful Infinite
Those stairs whose steps are worlds, above and under,
Glory on glory, wonder upon wonder!

The Lightnings lit the Earthquake on his way;
The sovran Thunder spoken to the World;
The realm-wide banners of the Wind unfurl'd;
Earth-prison'd Fires broke loose into the day;
Or the great Seas awoke—then slept for aye!

Ah! sure the heart of Man, too strongly tried
By Godlike Presences so vast and fair,
Withering with dread, or sick with love's despair,
Had wept for ever, and to Heaven cried,
Or struck with lightnings of delight had died.

But He, though heir of Immortality,
With mortal dust too feeble for the sight,
Draws thro' a veil God's overwhelming light;
Use arms the Soul—anon there moveth by
A more majestic Angel—and we die!

FREDERICK TENNYSON

Stanzas from 'The Holytide'

I

THE days are sad, it is the Holytide:

When flowers have ceased to blow, and birds to sing,
Where shall the weary heart of Man abide,
Save in the jocund memories of the Spring?
As the gray twilight creeps across the snow,
Let us discourse of walks when leaves are green;
Methinks the roses are more sweet that blow
In Memory's shade, than any that are seen.

II

The days are sad, it is the Holytide:

Drear clouds have hid the crimson of the West,
And, like the winged Day, Delight hath died
Within me, and proud Passions gone to rest.
In this dusk hour, before the lamps are lit,
Thro' the Heart's long long gallery I will go,
And mark pale Memory's taper fall on it
Starting strange hues, like firelight on the snow.

III

The days are sad, it is the Holytide:

The Wintermorn is short, the Night is long;
So let the lifeless Hours be glorified
With deathless thoughts, and echoed in sweet song:
And thro' the sunset of this purple cup
They will resume the roses of their prime,
And the old Dead will hear us, and wake up,
Pass with dim smiles, and make our hearts sublime!

FREDERICK TENNYSON

IV

The days are sad, it is the Holytide:
Be dusky mistletoes, and hollies strown,
Sharp as the spear that pierced his sacred side,
Red as the drops upon his thorny crown;
No haggard Passion, and no lawless Mirth
Fright off the sombre Muse—tell sweet old tales,
Sing songs, as we sit bending o'er the hearth,
Till the lamp flickers, and the memory fails.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

1809–1883

Quatrains from 'Omar Khayyám'

AWAKE! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultán's Turret in a Noose of Light.

II

Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

EDWARD FITZGERALD

III

Irám indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshýd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
 But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

IV

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
 Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
 Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

VI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
 Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone.

VII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
 How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

VIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahráw, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

IX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XI

Ah, my Belovèd, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears—
To-morrow?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

XII

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,

EDWARD FITZGERALD

Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

XIII

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

XIV

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

XV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

XVI

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

XVII

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
 Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

XVIII

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
 And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all—*He* knows—*HE* knows!

XIX

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

XX

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
 The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XXI

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

To The Rev. F. D. Maurice

COME, when no graver cares employ,
Godfather, come and see your boy:
Your presence will be sun in winter,
Making the little one leap for joy.

For, being of that honest few,
Who give the Fiend himself his due,
Should eighty-thousand college-councils
Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you;

Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight;

Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
I watch the twilight falling brown
All round a careless-order'd garden
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,
But honest talk and wholesome wine,
And only hear the magpie gossip
Garrulous under a roof of pine:

For groves of pine on either hand,
To break the blast of winter, stand;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And further on, the hoary Channel
Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand;

Where, if below the milky steep
Some ship of battle slowly creep,
And on thro' zones of light and shadow
Glimmer away to the lonely deep,

We might discuss the Northern sin
Which made a selfish war begin;
Dispute the claims, arrange the chances;
Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win:

Or whether war's avenging rod
Shall lash all Europe into blood;
Till you should turn to dearer matters,
Dear to the man that is dear to God;

How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings, of the poor;
How gain in life, as life advances,
Valour and charity more and more.

Come, Maurice, come: the lawn as yet
Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet;
But when the wreath of March has blossom'd,
Crocus, anemone. violet,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Or later, pay one visit here,
For those are few we hold as dear;
Nor pay but one, but come for many,
Many and many a happy year.

Ænone

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful *Ænone*, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear Mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain
 brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine:

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's:
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

"My own Cēnone,
Beautiful-brow'd Cēnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows."

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added "This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due:
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnight: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
"Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

Again she said: "I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circl'd thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom."

'Here she ceas'd,

And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

‘Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Ænone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.’

From ‘In Memoriam’

CALM is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

From 'Maud'

THERE is none like her, none.
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.

Tithonus

THE woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON ·

But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And these returning on thy silver wheels.

Song from 'The Princess'

'TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

'Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

'Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

The Daisy

Written at Edinburgh

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
 In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road;
 How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell
 To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
 Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
A milky-bell's amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
 Now watching high on mountain cornice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipt palm of which they boast;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours;
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain;
Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;
Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como; shower and storm and blast

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded: and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,

The rich Virgilian rustic measure,
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on The Lariano crept

To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
A cypress in the moonlight shake,

The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
One tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
And up the snowy Splügen drew,

But ere we reach'd the highest summit
I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
And now it tells of Italy.

O love, we two shall go no longer
To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
Whose crying is a cry for gold;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Yet here to-night in this dark city,
When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
This nurseling of another sky
Still in the little book you lent me,
And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,
The bitter east, the misty summer
And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
My fancy fled to the South again.

Crossing the Bar

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

ROBERT BROWNING

1812-1889

My Last Duchess

Ferrara

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first

ROBERT BROWNING

Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!

Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,

See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill

At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,

Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far

Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

ROBERT BROWNING

Any Wife to Any Husband

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
 As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
 Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
 Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
 Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
 Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
 While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

ROBERT BROWNING

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne

Alike, this body given to show it by!

Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,

What plaudits from the next world after this,

Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

And is it not the bitterer to think

That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink

Although thy love was love in very deed?

I know that nature! Pass a festive day,

Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away

Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;

If old things remain old things all is well,

For thou art grateful as becomes man best:

And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,

Or viewed me from a window, not so soon

With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis brief;

The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,

The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;

That is a portrait of me on the wall—

Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:

And for all this, one little hour to thank!

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,

Because our inmost beings met and mixed,

ROBERT BROWNING

Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
“Therefore she is immortally my bride;
“Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

“So, what if in the dusk of life that’s left,
“I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
“Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
“The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
“—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
“It will be at the sunrise! What’s to blame?”

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing’s sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need’st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

—Ah, but the fresher faces! “Is it true,”
Thou’lt ask, “some eyes are beautiful and new?
“Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such
wealth?

“And if a man would press his lips to lips
“Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
“The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

“It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
“More than if such a picture I prefer
“Passing a day with, to a room’s bare side:

ROBERT BROWNING

The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more:
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and such
"The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

ROBERT BROWNING

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,

If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it

The better that they are so blank, I know!

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more

By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:

What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

Pride?—when those eyes forstall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,

Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

ROBERT BROWNING

*The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's
Church*

Rome 15—

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not!
Well—

She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:

ROBERT BROWNING

And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were
missed!

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—

ROBERT BROWNING

'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve.
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste

ROBERT BROWNING

Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizer and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
“Do I live, am I dead?” There, leave me, there!

ROBERT BROWNING

For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

AUBREY DE VERE

1814-1902

Spring

ONCE more the cuckoo's call I hear;
I know, in many a glen profound,
The earliest violets of the year
Rise up like water from the ground.

The thorn I know once more is white;
And, far down many a forest dale,
The anemones in dubious light
Are trembling like a bridal veil.

AUBREY DE VERE

By streams released that singing flow
From craggy shelf through sylvan glades
The pale narcissus, well I know,
Smiles hour by hour on greener shades.

The honeyed cowslip tufts once more
The golden slopes; with gradual ray
The primrose stars the rock, and o'er
The wood-path strews its milky way.

THE YEAR OF SORROW

Autumnal Ode

MINSTREL and Genius, to whose songs or sighs
The round earth modulates her changeful sphere,
That bend'st in shadow from yon western skies,
And lean'st, cloud-hid, along the woodlands sere,
Too deep thy notes—too pure—for mortal ear!
Yet Nature hears them: without aid of thine
How sad were her decline!
From thee she learns with just and soft gradation
Her dying hues in death to harmonize;
Through thee her obsequies
A glory wear that conquers desolation.
Through thee she singeth, "Faithless were the sighing
Breathed o'er a beauty only born to fleet:
A holy thing and precious is the dying
Of that whose life was innocent and sweet."

AUBREY DE VERE

From many a dim retreat

Lodged on high-bosomed, echoing mountain lawn,
Or chiming convent 'mid dark vale withdrawn,
From cloudy shrine or rapt oracular seat
Voices of loftier worlds that saintly strain repeat.

II

It is the Autumnal Epode of the year:

The nymphs that urge the seasons on their round,
They to whose green lap flies the startled deer
When bays the far off hound,
They that drag April by the rain-bright hair,
(Though sun-showers daze her and the rude winds
scare)

O'er March's frosty bound,
They by whose warm and furtive hand unwound
The cestus falls from May's new-wedded breast—
Silent they stand beside dead Summer's bier,
With folded palms, and faces to the West,
And their loose tresses sweep the dewy ground.

III

A sacred stillness hangs upon the air,
A sacred clearness. Distant shapes draw nigh:
Glistens yon Elm-grove, to its heart laid bare,
And all articulate in its symmetry,
With here and there a branch that from on high
Far flashes washed as in a watery gleam:
Beyond, the glossy lake lies calm—a beam
Upheaved, as if in sleep, from its slow central stream.

AUBREY DE VERE

IV

This quiet—is it Truth, or some fair mask?
Is pain no more? Shall Sleep be lord, not Death?
Shall sickness cease to afflict and overtask
The spent and laboring breath?
Is there 'mid all yon farms and fields, this day,
No grey old head that drops? No darkening eye?
Spirits of Pity, lift your hands, and pray—
Each hour, alas, men die!

The love songs of the Blackbird now are done:
Upon the o'ergrown, loose, red-berried cover
The latest of late warblers sings as one
That trolls at random when the feast is over:
From bush to bush the dusk-bright cobwebs hover,
Silvering the dried-up rill's exhausted urn;
No breeze is fluting o'er the green morass:
Nor falls the thistle-down: in deep-drenched grass,
Now blue, now red, the shifting dew-gems burn.

VI

Mine ear thus torpid held, methinks mine eye
Is armed the more with visionary power:
As with a magnet's force each redd'ning bower
Compels me through the woodland pageantry:
Slowly I track the forest's skirt: emerging,
Slowly I climb from pastoral steep to steep:

AUBREY DE VERE

I see far mists from reedy valleys surging:
I follow the procession of white sheep
That fringe with wool old stock and ruined rath,
How staid to-day, how eager when the lambs
Went leaping round their dams!
I cross the leaf-choked stream from stone to stone,
Pass the hoar ash tree, trace the upland path,
The furze-brake that in March all golden shone
Reflected in the shy kingfisher's bath.

VII

No more from full-leaved woods that music swells
Which in the summer filled the satiate ear:
A fostering sweetness still from bosky dells
Murmurs; but I can hear
A harsher sound when down, at intervals,
The dry leaf rattling falls.
Dark as those spots which herald swift disease
The death-blot marks for death the leaf yet firm:
Beside the leaf down-trodden trails the worm:
In forest depths the haggard, whitening grass
Repines at youth departed. Half-stripped trees
Reveal, as one who says, "Thou too must pass,"
Plainlier each day their quaint anatomies.
Yon Poplar grove is troubled! Bright and bold
Babbled his cold leaves in the July breeze
As though above our heads a runnel rolled:
His mirth is o'er: subdued by old October
He counts his lessening wealth, and, sadly sober,
Tinkles his minute tablets of wan gold.

AUBREY DE VERE

VIII

Be still, ye sighs of the expiring year!

A sword there is:—ye play but with the sheath!
Whispers there are more piercing, yet more dear

Than yours, that come to me those boughs beneath;
And well-remembered footsteps known of old
Tread soft the mildewed mould.

O magic memory of the things that were—

Of those whose hands our childish locks carest,
Of one so angel-like in tender care,
Of one in majesty so God-like drest—

O phantom faces painted on the air
Of friend or sudden guest;—

I plead in vain:

The woods revere, but cannot heal my pain.

Ye sheddings from the Yew tree and the Pine,
If on your rich and aromatic dust

I laid my forehead, and my hands put forth
In the last beam that warms the forest floor,
No answer to my yearnings would be mine,
To me no answer through those branches hoar

Would reach in noontide trance or moony gust!

Her secret Heaven would keep, and mother Earth
Speak from her deep heart—"Where thou know'st not,
trust!"

IX

That pang is past. Once more my pulses keep
A tenor calm, that knows nor grief nor joy;

AUBREY DE VERE

Once more I move as one that died in sleep,
And treads, a Spirit, the haunts he trod, a boy,
And sees them like-unlike, and sees beyond:
Then earthly life comes back, and I despond.
All life, not life! Dim woods of crimsoned beech
That swathe the hills in sacerdotal stoles,
Burn on, burn on! the year ere long will reach
That day made holy to Departed Souls,
The day whereon man's heart, itself a priest,
Descending to that Empire pale wherein
Beauty and Sorrow dwell, but pure from Sin,
Holds with God's Church at once its fast and feast.
Dim woods, they, they alone your vaults should tread,
The sad and saintly Dead!
Your pathos those alone ungrieved could meet
Who fit them for the Beatific Vision:
The things that as they pass us seem to cheat,
To them would be a music-winged fruition,
A cadence sweetest in the soft subsiding:
Transience to them were dear;—for theirs the
abiding—
Dear as that Pain which clears from fleshly film
The spirit's eye, matures each spirit-germ,
Frost-bound on earth, but at the appointed term
Mirror of Godhead in the immortal realm.

Lo there the regal exiles!—under shades
Deeper than ours, yet in a finer air—
Climbing, successive, elders, youths, and maids,

AUBREY DE VERE

The penitential mountain's ebon stair:
The earth-shadow clips that halo round their hair:
And as lone outcasts watch a moon that wanes,
Receding slowly o'er their native plains,
Thus watch they, wistful, something far but fair.
Serene they stand, and wait,
Self-exiled by the ever-open gate:
Awhile self-exiled from the All-pitying Eyes,
Lest mortal stain should blot their Paradise.
Silent they pace, ascending high and higher
The hills of God, a hand on every heart
That willing burns, a vase of cleansing fire
Fed by God's love in souls from God apart.
Each lifted face with thirst of long desire
Is pale; but o'er it grows a mystic sheen,
Because on them God's face, by them unseen,
Is turned, through narrowing darkness hourly nigher.

XI

Sad thoughts, why roam ye thus in your unrest
The bourne unseen? Why scorn our mortal bound?
Is it not kindly, Earth's maternal breast?
Is it not fair, her head with vine-wreaths crowned?
Farm-yard and barn are heaped with golden store;
High piled the sheaves illumine the russet plain;
Hedges and hedge-row trees are yellowed o'er
With waifs and trophies of the laboring wain:
Why murmur, "Change is change, when downward
ranging;
Spring's upward change but pointed to the unchanging?"

AUBREY DE VERE

Yet, O how just your sorrow, if ye knew
The true grief's sanction true!
'Tis not the thought of parting youth that moves us;
'Tis not alone the pang for friends departed:
The Autumnal pain that raises while it proves us
Wells from a holier source and deeper-hearted!
For this a sadness swells above our mirth;
For this a bitter runs beneath the sweetness;
The throne that shakes not is the Spirit's right;
The heart and hope of Man are infinite;
Heaven is his home, and, exiled here on earth,
Completion most betrays the incompleteness!

XII

Heaven is his home.—But hark! the breeze increases:
The sunset forests, catching sudden fire,
Flash, swell, and sing, a million-organed choir:
Roofing the West, rich clouds in glittering fleeces
O'er-arch ethereal spaces and divine
Of heaven's clear hyaline.
No dream is this! Beyond that radiance golden
God's Sons I see, His armies bright and strong,
The ensanguined Martyrs here with palms high holden,
The Virgins there, a lily-lifting throng!
The Splendors nearer draw. In choral blending
The Prophets' and the Apostles' chaunt I hear;
I see the City of the Just descending
With gates of pearl and diamond bastions sheer.
The walls are agate and chalcedony:
On jacinth street and jasper parapet

AUBREY DE VERE

The unwaning light is light of Deity,
Not beam of lessening moon or suns that set.
That undeciduous forestry of spires
Lets fall no leaf! those lights can never range:
Saintly fruitions and divine desires
Are blended there in rapture without change.
—Man was not made for things that leave us,
For that which goeth and returneth,
For hopes that lift us yet deceive us,
For love that wears a smile yet mourneth;
Not for fresh forests from the dead leaves springing,
The cyclic re-creation which, at best,
Yields us—betrayal still to promise clinging—
But tremulous shadows of the realm of rest:
For things immortal Man was made,
God's Image, latest from His hand,
Co-heir with Him, Who in Man's flesh arrayed
Holds o'er the worlds the Heavenly-Human wand:
His portion this—sublime
To stand where access none hath Space or Time,
Above the starry host, the Cherub band,
To stand—to advance—and after all to stand!

EMILY BRONTË

1818–1848

Remembrance

COLD in the earth—and the deep snow piled above
thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!

EMILY BRONTË

Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But, when the days of golden dreams have perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;

EMILY BRONTË

Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

IF grief for grief can touch thee,
If answering woe for woe,
If any ruth can melt thee,
Come to me now!

I cannot be more lonely,
More drear I cannot be!
My worn heart throbs so wildly
'Twill break for thee.

And when the world despises,
When heaven repels my prayer,
Will not mine angel comfort?
Mine idol hear?

Yes, by the tears I've poured,
By all my hours of pain,
O I shall surely win thee,
Beloved, again.

EMILY BRONTË

Stanzas

OFTEN rebuked, yet always back returning
To those first feelings that were born with me,
And leaving busy chase of wealth and learning
For idle dreams of things which cannot be:

To-day, I will seek not the shadowy region;
Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear;
And visions rising, legion after legion,
Bring the unreal world too strangely near.

I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain-side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes *one* human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

EMILY BRONTË

Last Lines

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idle froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,

EMILY BRONTË

And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—THOU art being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

1819-1861

The Latest Decalogue

THOU shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honour thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall;
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

The Shadow

[*Extract*]

I DREAMED a dream: I dreamt that I espied,
Upon a stone that was not rolled aside,
A Shadow sit upon a grave—a Shade,
As thin, as unsubstantial, as of old
Came, the Greek poet told,
To lick the life-blood in the trench Ulysses made—
As pale, as thin, and said:
'I am the Resurrection of the Dead.
The night is past, the morning is at hand,
And I must in my proper semblance stand,
Appear brief space and vanish,—listen, this is true,
I am that Jesus whom they slew.'

And shadows dim, I dreamed, the dead apostles came,
And bent their heads for sorrow and for shame—
Sorrow for their great loss, and shame
For what they did in that vain name.

And in long ranges far behind there seemed
Pale vapoury angel forms; or was it cloud? that kept
Strange watch; the women also stood beside and wept.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

And Peter spoke the word:

'O my own Lord,
What is it we must do?
Is it then all untrue?
Did we not see, and hear, and handle Thee,
Yea, for whole hours
Upon the Mount in Galilee,
On the lake shore, and here at Bethany,
When Thou ascendedst to Thy God and ours?'
And paler still became the distant cloud,
And at the word the women wept aloud.

*

SAY not the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822-1888

Mycerinus

'Nor by the justice that my father spurn'd,
Not for the thousands whom my father slew,
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks were
due;

Fell this late voice from lips that cannot lie,
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of Law;
Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full of sway.
I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong:
The Gods declare my recompense to-day.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

I look'd for life more lasting, rule more high;
And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given:
A light that from some upper fount did beam,
Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven;
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed:
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures, then depart,
When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims its meed:
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Powers,
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad rushing of the insurged Nile?
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?

Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labour: when the circumambient gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot ray,
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;
Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; but something would I say—
Something—yet what I know not: for the Gods

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain: and ye must bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap their praise,
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length of days.'

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people: so he spake;
And turning, left them there; and with brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.
There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers:
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine;

MATTHEW ARNOLD

While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
Who wrestles with his dream; as some pale Shape,
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,
Whispering, 'A little space, and thou art mine.'
It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.
It may be; but not less his brow was smooth,
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, pall'd with its own fullness, ebb'd and died
In the rich languor of long summer days;
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes that roof'd
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring;
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.

So six long years he revell'd, night and day;
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The River

STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat
Under the rustling poplars' shade;
Silent the swans beside us float:
None speaks, none heeds—ah, turn thy head.

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland:
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine;
On mine let rest that lovely hand.

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
My heart is swoln with love unsaid:
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head.

Before I die, before the soul,
Which now is mine, must re-attain
Immunity from my control,
And wander round the world again:

Before this teas'd o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves its vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.

Palladium

SET where the upper streams of Simois flow
Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;

MATTHEW ARNOLD

And Hector was in Ilium, far below,
And fought, and saw it not, but there it stood.

It stood; and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
Round Troy; but while this stood, Troy could not
fall.

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air;
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;
We visit it by moments, ah! too rare.

Men will renew the battle in the plain
To-morrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;
Hector and Ajax will be there again;
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The Scholar Gipsy

Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill;
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes:
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd
green;
Come, Shepherd, and again renew the quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:

MATTHEW ARNOLD

And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfum'd showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers:

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
The story of that Oxford scholar poor
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life inquir'd.
Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desir'd
The workings of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts they
will:
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart.
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this
skill.'

MATTHEW ARNOLD

This said, he left them, and return'd no more,
But rumours hung about the countryside
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the Gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock'd
boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly:
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most I know, thou lov'st retired ground.
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the slow punt swings round:

MATTHEW ARNOLD

And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood
bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream:

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone—
Dark bluebells drench'd with dew of summer
eves—
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering
Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air;
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert
gone.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee watching, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and
shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow
away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,
Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd way
Pitch their smok'd tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground call'd Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers
go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge?

MATTHEW ARNOLD

And thou hast climb'd the hill
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range,
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes
fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd
grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy tribe:
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid;
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown
grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls:
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire:
Else wert thou long since number'd with the
dead—

Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire.
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been
baffled, brings.

O Life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he
strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven: and we,
Vague half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose weak resolves never have been fulfill'd;

MATTHEW ARNOLD

For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer; and amongst us One,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was sooth'd, and how the
head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipp'd Patience for our only friend,
Sad Patience, too near neighbour to Despair:
But none has hope like thine.
Thou through the fields and through the woods
dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for
rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made:
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets
of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

*To Marguerite, in Returning A Volume of the
Letters of Ortis*

YES: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.

The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

A Southern Night

THE sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes,
Melt into open, moonlit sea;
The soft Mediterranean breaks
At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine
Like ghosts, the huge, gnarl'd olives stand;
Behind, that lovely mountain-line!
While by the strand

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away
To where the lighthouse beacons bright
Far in the bay.

Ah, such a night, so soft, so lone,
So moonlit, saw me once of yore
Wander, unquiet, and my own
Vext heart deplore!

But now that trouble is forgot;
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
My brother! and thine early lot,
Possess me quite.

The murmur of this Midland deep
Is heard to-night around thy grave
There where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
O'erfrowns the wave.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
With Indian heats at last fordome,
With public toil and private teen,
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,
I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come;
Slow round her paddles dies away
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side;
Ah, gently place him on the bench!
That spirit—if all have not yet died—
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
The mien of youth we used to see,
Poor, gallant boy!—for such thou wast,
Still art, to me.

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse,
The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak;
And whiter than thy white burnous
That wasted cheek!

Enough! The boat, with quiet shock,
Unto its haven coming nigh,
Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
Lands thee, to die.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Ah me! Gibraltar's strand is far,
But farther yet across the brine
Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
Remote from thine.

For there where Morning's sacred fount
Its golden rain on earth confers,
The snowy Himalayan Mount
O'ershadows hers.

Strange irony of Fate, alas,
Which for two jaded English saves,
When from their dusty life they pass,
Such peaceful graves!

In cities should we English lie,
Where cries are rising ever new,
And men's incessant stream goes by;
We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,
Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from pole to pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by;
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
Not by this gracious Midland sea
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
Should our graves be!

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
And men were specks, and life a play;
Who made the roots of trees his bed,
And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend
To villages and homes of man,
For food to keep him till he end
His mortal span,

And the pure goal of Being reach;
Grey-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
Without companion, without speech,
By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold,
And tranquil as the glacier snows—
He by those Indian mountains old
Might well repose!

Some grey crusading knight austere
Who bore Saint Louis company
And came home hurt to death and here
Landed to die;

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Some youthful troubadour whose tongue
Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
Who here outwearied sunk, and sung
His dying strain;

Some girl who here from castle-bower,
With furtive step and cheek of flame,
'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship,
And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
And unbound hair,

And lived some moons in happy trance,
Then learnt his death, and pined away—
Such by these waters of romance
'Twas meet to lay!

But you—a grave for knight or sage,
Romantic, solitary, still,
O spent ones of a work-day age!
Befits you ill.

So sang I; but the midnight breeze
Down to the brimm'd moon-charmèd main
Comes softly through the olive-trees,
And checks my strain.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

I think of her, whose gentle tongue
All plaint in her own cause controll'd;
Of thee I think, my brother! young
In heart, high-soul'd;

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
That cordial hand, that bearing free,
I see them still, I see them now,
Shall always see!

And what but gentleness untired,
And what but noble feeling warm,
Wherever shown, howe'er attired,
Is grace, is charm?

What else is all these waters are,
What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
What else is bright, what else is fair,
What else serene?

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine!
Gently by his, ye waters, glide!
To that in you which is divine
They were allied.

Dover Beach

THE sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the Straits;—on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay,
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd sand,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

COVENTRY PATMORE

1823-1896

Saint Valentine's Day

WELL dost thou, Love, thy solemn Feast to hold
In vestal February;
Not rather choosing out some rosy day
From the rich coronet of the coming May,
When all things meet to marry!

O, quick, praeernal Power
That signall'st punctual through the sleepy mould
The Snowdrop's time to flower,
Fair as the rash oath of virginity
Which is first-love's first cry;
O, Baby Spring,
That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth
A month before the birth;
Whence is the peaceful poignancy,
The joy contrite,
Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,
That burthens now the breath of everything,
Though each one sighs as if to each alone
The cherish'd pang were known?

COVENTRY PATMORE

At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart,
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's heart;
In evening's hush
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush;
The hill with like remorse
Smiles to the Sun's smile in his westering course;
The fisher's drooping skiff
In yonder sheltering bay;
The choughs that call about the shining cliff;
The children, noisy in the setting ray;
Own the sweet season, each thing as it may;
Thoughts of strange kindness and forgotten peace
In me increase;
And tears arise
Within my happy, happy Mistress' eyes,
And, lo, her lips, averted from my kiss,
Ask from Love's bounty, ah, much more than bliss!
Is't the sequester'd and exceeding sweet
Of dear Desire electing his defeat?
Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope
Uttering first-love's first cry,
Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,
Love's natural hope?
Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury!
Behold, all amorous May,
With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,
Avoids thee of thy vows!
Were it for thee, with her warm bosom near,
To abide the sharpness of the Seraph's sphere?
Forget thy foolish words;

COVENTRY PATMORE

Go to her summons gay,
Thy heart with dead, wing'd Innocencies fill'd,
Ev'n as a nest with birds
After the old ones by the hawk are kill'd.

Well dost thou, Love, to celebrate
The noon of thy soft ecstasy,
Or e'er it be too late,
Or e'er the Snowdrop die!

THE UNKNOWN EROS

Departure

It was not like your great and gracious ways!
Do you, that have nought other to lament,
Never, my Love, repent
Of how, that July afternoon,
You went,
With sudden unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
Upon your journey of so many days,
Without a single kiss, or a good-bye?
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well,
To hear you such things speak,
And I could tell
What made your eyes a growing gloom of love,
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.

COVENTRY PATMORE

And it was like your great and gracious ways
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,
Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash
To let the laughter flash,
Whilst I drew near,
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear.
But all at once to leave me at the last,
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
And go your journey of all days
With not one kiss, or a good-bye,
And the only loveless look the look with which you
pass'd:
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

THE UNKNOWN EROS

A Farewell

With all my will, but much against my heart,
We two now part.
My Very Dear,
Our solace, is, the sad road lies so clear.
It needs no art,
With faint, averted feet
And many a tear,
In our opposed paths to persevere.
Go thou to East, I West.
We will not say
There's any hope, it is so far away.

COVENTRY PATMORE

But, O, my Best,
When the one darling of our widowhead,
The nursling Grief,
Is dead,
And no dews blur our eyes
To see the peach-bloom come in evening skies,
Perchance we may,
Where now this night is day,
And even through faith of still averted feet,
Making full circle of our banishment,
Amazed meet;
The bitter journey to the bourne so sweet
Seasoning the termless feast of our content
With tears of recognition never dry.

THE UNKNOWN EROS

The Tribute

Boon Nature to the woman bows;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad;
And, chiefest far herself of shows,
All others help her, and are glad:
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear;
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair;
For her the seas their pearls reveal;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre and lapis lazuli;

COVENTRY PATMORE

The worm its golden woof presents;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves;
And all, by this their power to give,
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.
THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

The Revulsion

[*Extract*]

'Twas when the spousal time of May
Hangs all the hedge with bridal wreaths,
And air's so sweet the bosom gay
Give thanks for every breath it breathes;
When like to like is gladly moved,
And each thing joins in Spring's refrain,
'Let those love now who never loved;
Let those who have loved love again;'
That I, in whom the sweet time wrought,
Lay stretch'd within a lonely glade,
Abandon'd to delicious thought,
Beneath the softly twinkling shade.
The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold
And, as the sun or shadow fell,
So these were green and those were gold;

COVENTRY PATMORE

In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,
And breadths of primrose lit the air,
Which, wandering through the woodland, stoop'd
And gather'd perfumes here and there;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,
And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among,
Fit for their only listener, Heaven.
I sigh'd, 'Immeasurable bliss
Gains nothing by becoming more!
Millions have meaning; after this
Cyphers forget the integer.'

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

SYDNEY DOBELL

1824-1874

Fragments from 'Crazed'

I

'THE Spring again hath started on the course
Wherein she seeketh Summer thro' the Earth.
I will arise and go upon my way.
It may be that the leaves of Autumn hid
His footsteps from me; it may be the snows.

'He is not dead. There was no funeral;
I wore no weeds. He must be in the Earth.
Oh where is he, that I may come to him
And he may charm the fever of my brain.

SYDNEY DOBELL

'Oh Spring, I hope that thou wilt be my friend.
Thro' the long weary Summer I toiled sore;
Having much sorrow of the envious woods
And groves that burgeoned round me where I came,
And when I would have seen him, shut him in.

'Also the Honeysuckle and wild bine
Being in love did hide him from my sight;
The Ash-tree bent above him; vicious weeds
Withheld me; Willows in the River-wind
Hissed at me, by the twilight, waving wands.

'Also, for I have told thee, oh dear Spring,
Thou knowest after I had sunk outworn
In the late summer gloom till Autumn came,
I looked up in the light of burning Woods
And entered on my wayfare when I saw
Gold on the ground and glory in the trees.

'And all my further journey thou dost know;
My toils and outcries as the lusty world
Grew thin to winter; and my ceaseless feet
In vales and on stark hills, till the first snow
Fell, and the large rain of the latter leaves.

'I hope that thou wilt be my friend, oh Spring,
And give me service of thy winds and streams.
It needs must be that he will hear thy voice,
For thou art much as I was when he woo'd
And won me long ago beside the Dee.

SYDNEY DOBELL

II

'Oh early Rain, oh passion of strong crying,
Say, dost thou weep, oh Rain, for him or me?
Alas, thou also goest to the Earth
And enterest as one brought home by fear.

'Rude with much woe, with expectation wild,
So dashest thou the doors and art not seen.
Whose burial did they speak of in the skies?

'I would that there were any grass-green grave
Where I might stand and say, "Here lies my Love";
And sigh, and look down to him, thro' the Earth.
And look up, thro' the clearing skies, and smile.'

Desolate

FROM the sad eaves the drip-drop of the rain!
The water washing at the latchel door;
A slow step plashing by upon the moor;
A single bleat far from the famished fold;
The clicking of an embered hearth and cold;
The rainy Robin tic-tac at the pane.

'So as it is with thee
Is it with me,
So as it is and it used not to be,
With thee used not to be,
Nor me.'
So singeth Robin on the willow tree,
The rainy Robin tic-tac at the pane.

SYDNEY DOBELL

Here in this breast all day
The fire is dim and low,
Within I care not to stay,
Without I care not to go.

A sadness ever sings
Of unforgotten things,
And the bird of love is patting at the pane;
But the wintry water deepens at the door,
And a step is plashing by upon the moor
Into the dark upon the darkening moor,
And alas, alas, the drip-drop of the rain!

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

1828-1882

The House of Life

Love Enthroned

I MARKED all kindred Powers the heart finds fair:—
Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with eyes upcast;
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;
And Youth, with still some single golden hair
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held him fast;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death to wear.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Love's throne was not with these; but far above
All passionate wind of welcome and farewell
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of;
Though Truth foreknow Love's heart, and Hope
foretell,
And Fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to Love.

Lovesight

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone),
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

Pride of Youth

EVEN as a child, of sorrow that we give
The dead, but little in his heart can find,

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Since without need of thought to his clear mind
Their turn it is to die and his to live:—

Even so the winged New Love smiles to receive
Along his eddying plumes the auroral wind,
Nor, forward glorying, casts one look behind
Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love fugitive.

There is a change in every hour's recall,
And the last cowslip in the fields we see
On the same day with the first corn-poppy.
Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary!

Without Her

WHAT of her glass without her? The blank grey
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's good grace,
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still?
A way-farer by barren ways and chill,
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,
Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Lost Days

THE lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath,
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself," (lo! each one saith,)
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"

A Superscription

LOOK in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of
sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

My Sister's Sleep

SHE fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids overweigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
With work to finish. For the glare
Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

“Glory unto the Newly Born!”
So, as said angels, she did say;
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long-watched-for rest!

She stopped an instant, calm, and turned;
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word:
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
“God knows I knew that she was dead.”
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock,
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
“Christ's blessing on the newly born!”

Sudden Light

I HAVE been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell:

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

You have been mine before,—
How long ago I may not know:
But just when at that swallow's soar
Your neck turned so,
Some veil did fall,—I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?
And shall not thus time's eddying flight
Still with our lives our love restore
In death's despite,
And day and night yield one delight once more?

The Woodspurge

THE wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

DANTE GABRIEL 'ROSSETTI

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

GEORGE MEREDITH

1828-1909

The Thrush in February

I KNOW him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of the million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to his world:—

GEORGE MEREDITH

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
An image of the deluge-ebb:—

And farther, they may hear along
The stream beneath the poplar row.
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
When waves of warm South-western rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;
Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;
She seems a while the vale to hold
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

GEORGE MEREDITH

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes;
An orb of lustre quits the height;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,
My care was but to soothe my need;
At peace among the littleworths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;
To that deep breast of song and light
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;
As 'tis to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich
The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things:

GEORGE MEREDITH

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;
A prodded ox, it drags and moans:
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

GEORGE MEREDITH

It strives without a mark for strife;
It feasts beside a famished host:
The loose restraint of wanton life,
That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there
Spring heroes many: issuing thence,
Names that should leave no vacant air
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.
Those warriors of the sighting brain
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead
The tidal multitude and blind
From bestial to the higher breed
By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,
Unknown in nature. This they knew:
That life begets with fair increase
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood
The instinct bred afield would match
To pipe thereof a swelling flood,
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

GEORGE MEREDITH

Though now the numbers count as drops
An urn might bear, they father Time.
She shapes anew her dusty crops;
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;
They climb to light, in her their root.
Your brutish cry at muffled fate
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
A Mother whom no cry can melt;
But read her past desires and fears,
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best:
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at a cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.
This breath, her gift, has only choice
Of service, breathe we in or out.

GEORGE MEREDITH

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand
Led our wild steps from slimy rock
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,
We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree
Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,
By reason hourly fed, that she,
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career
From torrent source, delirious dream,
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been
Her cherished offspring ever; how
The Spirit served by her is seen
Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
Vitality as Earth it mates,
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

GEORGE MEREDITH

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

Modern Love

I

'I PLAY for Seasons; not Eternities!'
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies
She is full sure! Upon her dying rose
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag—there, an urn.
Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end!
This lesson of our only visible friend
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
Yes! yes!—but, oh, our human rose is fair
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
When the renewed for ever of a kiss
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

II

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,

GEORGE MEREDITH

And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

III

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love, that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love, that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

GEORGE MEREDITH

Hymn to Colour

WITH Life and Death I walked when Love appeared,
And made them on each side a shadow seem.
Through wooded vales the land of dawn we neared,
Where down smooth rapids whirls the helmless dream
To fall on daylight; and night puts away
Her darker veil for grey.

II

In that grey veil green grassblades brushed we by;
We came where woods breathed sharp, and overhead
Rocks raised clear horns on a transforming sky:
Around, save for those shapes, with him who led
And linked them, desert varied by no sign
Of other life than mine.

III

By this the dark-winged planet, raying wide,
From the mild pearl-glow to the rose upborne,
Drew in his fires, less faint than far descried,
Pure-fronted on a stronger wave of morn:
And those two shapes the splendour interweaved
Hung web-like, sank and heaved.

IV

Love took my hand when hidden stood the sun
To fling his robe on shoulder-heights of snow.
Then said: There lie they, Life and Death in one.
Whichever is, the other is: but know,

GEORGE MEREDITH

It is thy craving self that thou dost see,
Not in them seeing me.

Shall man into the mystery of breath
From his quick beating pulse a pathway spy?
Or learn the secret of the shrouded death,
By lifting up the lid of a white eye?
Cleave thou thy way with fathering desire
Of fire to reach to fire.

VI

Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.
To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,
In knotting arms, yet boundless: him beside,
She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power
Brings heaven to the flower.

VII

He gives her homeliness in desert air,
And sovereignty in spaciousness; he leads
Through widening chambers of surprise to where
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,
Because his touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends.

VIII

Death begs of Life his blush; Life Death persuades
To keep long day with his caresses graced.

GEORGE MEREDITH

He is the heart of light, the wing of shades,
The crown of beauty: never soul embraced
Of him can harbour unfaith; soul of him
Possessed walks never dim.

IX

Love eyed his rosy memories: he sang:
O bloom of dawn, breathed up from the gold sheaf
Held springing beneath Orient! that dost hang
The space of dewdrops running over leaf;
Thy fleetingness is bigger in the ghost
Than Time with all his host!

X

Of thee to say behold, has said adieu:
But love remembers how the sky was green,
And how the grasses glimmered lightest blue;
How saint-like grey took fervour: how the screen
Of cloud grew violet; how thy moment came
Between a blush and flame.

XI

Love saw the emissary eglantine
Break wave round thy white feet above the gloom;
Lay finger on thy star; thy raiment line
With cherub wing and limb; wed thy soft bloom,
Gold-quivering like sunrays in thistle-down,
Earth under rolling brown.

GEORGE MEREDITH

XII

They do not look through love to look on thee,
Grave heavenliness! nor know they joy of sight,
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be
Its wrecking and last issue of delight.
Dead seasons quicken in one petal-spot
Of colour unforgot.

XIII

This way have men come out of brutishness
To spell the letters of the sky and read
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.
With thee, O fount of the Untimed! to lead;
Drink they of thee, thee eyeing, they unaged
Shall on through brave wars waged.

XIV

More gardens will they win than any lost;
The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain.
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,
To stature of the Gods will they attain.
They shall uplift their Earth to meet her Lord,
Themselves the attuning chord!

XV

The song had ceased; my vision with the song.
Then of those Shadows, which one made descent
Beside me I knew not: but Life ere long
Came on me in the public ways and bent
Eyes deeper than of old: Death met I too,
And saw the dawn glow through.

A Pause of Thought

I LOOKED for that which is not, nor can be,
 And hope deferred made my heart sick in truth:
 But years must pass before a hope of youth
 Is resigned utterly.

I watched and waited with a steadfast will:
 And though the object seemed to flee away
 That I so longed for, ever day by day
 I watched and waited still.

Sometimes I said: This thing shall be no more;
 My expectation wearies and shall cease;
 I will resign it now and be at peace:
 Yet never gave it o'er.

Sometimes I said: It is an empty name
 I long for; to a name why should I give
 The peace of all the days I have to live?—
 Yet gave it all the same.

Alas, thou foolish one! alike unfit
 For healthy joy and salutary pain:
 Thou knowest the chase useless, and again
 Turnest to follow it.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

Twilight, Calm

Oh, pleasant eventide!
Clouds on the western side
Grow grey and greyer, hiding the warm sun:
The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood:
The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
But lazily; pauses; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the moon:
The grasshoppers are still; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad lime;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home:

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain
The passion of her strain;
And yet we little understand or know:
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein?

In separate herds the deer
Lie; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn:
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes;

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck:
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly: how the dew drops fall damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her lamp,
Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East:
For night has come; and the great calm has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

Echo

COME to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
() memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

Where thirsting longing eyes
 Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
 My very life again though cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
 Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
 Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

Remember

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
 You tell me of our future that you planned:
 Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
 For if the darkness and corruption leave
 A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
 Than that you should remember and be sad.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

Memory

I NURSED it in my bosom while it lived,
I hid it in my heart when it was dead;
In joy I sat alone, even so I grieved
Alone and nothing said.

I shut the door to face the naked truth,
I stood alone—I faced the truth alone,
Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth
Till first and last were shown.

I took the perfect balances and weighed;
No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise,
Weighed, found it wanting: not a word I said,
But silent made my choice.

None know the choice I made; I make it still.
None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
Breaking mine idol: I have braced my will
Once, chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, I laid it cold,
Crushed in my deep heart where it used to live.
My heart dies inch by inch; the time grows old,
Grows old in which I grieve.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

II

I have a room whereinto no one enters
Save I myself alone:
There sits a blessed memory on a throne,
There my life centres.

While winter comes and goes—oh tedious comer!—
And while its nip-wind blows;
While bloom the bloodless lily and warm rose
Of lavish summer.

If any should force entrance he might see there
One buried yet not dead,
Before whose face I no more bow my head
Or bend my knee there;

But often in my worn life's autumn weather
I watch there with clear eyes,
And think how it will be in Paradise
When we're together.

Rest

O EARTH, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

Monna Innominata

"Vien dietro a me e lascia dir le genti."—DANTE.

"Contando i casi della vita nostra."—PETRARCA.

MANY in aftertimes will say of you
"He loved her"—while of me what will they say?
Not that I loved you more than just in play,
For fashion's sake as idle women do.
Even let them prate; who know not what we knew
Of love and parting in exceeding pain,
Of parting hopeless here to meet again,
Hopeless on earth, and heaven is out of view.
But by my heart of love laid bare to you,
My love that you can make not void nor vain,
Love that foregoes you but to claim anew
Beyond this passage of the gate of death,
I charge you at the Judgment make it plain
My love of you was life and not a breath.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

"E la Sua Volontade è nostra pace."—DANTE.

"Sol con questi pensier, con altre chiome."—PETRARCA.

Youth gone, and beauty gone if ever there
Dwelt beauty in so poor a face as this;
Youth gone and beauty, what remains of bliss?
I will not bind fresh roses in my hair,
To shame a cheek at best but little fair,—
Leave youth his roses, who can bear a thorn,—
I will not seek for blossoms anywhere,
Except such common flowers as blow with corn.
Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?
The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,
A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;
The silence of a heart which sang its songs
While youth and beauty made a summer morn,
Silence of love that cannot sing again.

The Bourne

UNDERNEATH the growing grass,
Underneath the living flowers,
Deeper than the sound of showers:
There we shall not count the hours
By the shadows as they pass.

Youth and health will be but vain,
Beauty reckoned of no worth:
There a very little girth
Can hold round what once the earth
Seemed too narrow to contain.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

The Thread of Life

THE irresponsive silence of the land,
The irresponsive sounding of the sea,
Speak both one message of one sense to me:—
Aloof, aloof, we stand aloof, so stand
Thou too aloof bound with the flawless band
Of inner solitude; we bind not thee;
But who from thy self-chain shall set thee free?
What heart shall touch thy heart? what hand thy
hand?—
And I am sometimes proud and sometimes meek,
And sometimes I remember days of old
When fellowship seemed not so far to seek
And all the world and I seemed much less cold,
And at the rainbow's foot lay surely gold,
And hope felt strong and life itself not weak.

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

1830-1897

Song

“WEARY wind of the West
Over the billowy sea—
Come to my heart, and rest!
Ah, rest with me!
Come from the distance dim
Bearing the sun's last sigh;
I hear thee sobbing for him
Through all the sky.”

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

So the wind came,
 Purpling the middle sea,
Crisping the ripples of flame—
 Came unto me;
Came with a rush to the shore,
 Came with a bound to the hill,
Fell, and died at my feet—
 Then all was still.

To K. H.

O FAR withdrawn into the lonely West,
 To whom those Irish hills are as a grave
 Cairn-crowned, the dead sun's monument,
And this fair English land but vaguely guessed—
 Thee, lady, by the melancholy wave
 I greet, where salt winds whistle through the
 bent,
And harsh sea-holly buds beneath thy foot are pressed.

What is thy thought? 'Tis not the obvious scene
 That holds thee with its grand simplicity
 Of natural forms. Thou musest rather
What larger life may be, what richer sheen
 Of social gloss in lands beyond the sea,
 What nobler cult than where, around thy father,
The silent fishers pray in chapel small and mean.

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

Yes, thou art absent far—thy soul has slipt
The visual bond, and thou art lowly kneeling
Upon a pavement with the sacred kisses
Of emerald and ruby gleamings lipped;
And down the tunnelled nave the organ, pealing,
Blows music-storm, and with far-floating blisses
Gives tremor to the bells, and shakes the dead men's
crypt.

This is thy thought; for this thou heav'st the sigh.
Yet, lady, look around thee! hast thou not
The life of real men, the home,
The tribe, and for a temple that old sky,
Whereto the sea intones the polyglot
Of water-pipes antiphonal, and the dome,
Round-arched, goes up to God in lapis lazuli?

JAMES THOMSON

1834-1882

The City of Dreadful Night

Proem

Lo, thus, as prostrate, "In the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad
tears."
Yet why evoke the spectres of black night

JAMES THOMSON

To blot the sunshine of exultant years?
Why disinter dead faith from mouldering hidden?
Why break the seals of mute despair unbidden,
And wail life's discords into careless ears?

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles
To show the bitter old and wrinkled truth
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,
False dreams, false hopes, false masks and modes of
youth;
Because it gives some sense of power and passion
In helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woe in living words howe'er uncouth.

Surely I write not for the hopeful young,
Or those who deem their happiness of worth,
Or such as pasture and grow fat among
The shows of life and feel nor doubt nor dearth,
Or pious spirits with a God above them
To sanctify and glorify and love them,
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.

For none of these I write, and none of these
Could read the writing if they deigned to try:
So may they flourish, in their due degrees,
On our sweet earth and in their unplaced sky.
If any cares for the weak words here written,
It must be some one desolate, Fate-smitten,
Whose faith and hope are dead, and who would die.

JAMES THOMSON

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;
"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

O sad Fraternity, do I unfold
Your dolorous mysteries shrouded from of yore?
Nay, be assured; no secret can be told
To any who divined it not before:
None uninitiate by many a presage
Will comprehend the language of the message,
Although proclaimed aloud for evermore.

Melancholia

BAFFLED and beaten back she works on still,
Weary and sick of soul she works the more,
Sustained by her indomitable will:
The hands shall fashion and the brain shall pore,
And all her sorrow shall be turned to labour,
Till Death the friend-foe piercing with his sabre
That mighty heart of hearts ends bitter war.

But as if blacker night could dawn on night,
With tenfold gloom on moonless night unstarred,
A sense more tragic than defeat and blight,

JAMES THOMSON

More desperate than strife with hope debarred,
More fatal than the adamantine Never
Encompassing her passionate endeavour,
Dawns glooming in her tenebrous regard:

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
Because they have no secret to express;
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
That all is vanity and nothingness.

Titanic from her high throne in the north,
That City's sombre Patroness and Queen,
In bronze sublimity she gazes forth
Over her Capital of teen and threne,
Over the river with its isles and bridges,
The marsh and moorland, to the stern rock-ridges,
Confronting them with a coëval mien.

The moving moon and stars from east to west
Circle before her in the sea of air;
Shadows and gleams glide round her solemn rest.
Her subjects often gaze up to her there:
The strong to drink new strength of iron endurance,
The weak new terrors; all, renewed assurance
And confirmation of the old despair.

WILLIAM MORRIS

1834-1896

Summer Dawn

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen,
betwixt the cloud-bars,
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

The Earthly Paradise

Proem

OF Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

WILLIAM MORRIS

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—
—Remember me a little then I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our
bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

*Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,*

WILLIAM MORRIS

And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

October

O LOVE, turn from the unchanging sea, and gaze
Down these grey slopes upon the year grown old,
A-dying mid the autumn-scented haze,
That hangeth o'er the hollow in the wold,
Where the wind-bitten ancient elms infold
Grey church, long barn, orchard, and red-roofed
stead,
Wrought in dead days for men a long while dead.

Come down, O love; may not our hands still
meet,
Since still we live to-day, forgetting June,
Forgetting May, deeming October sweet—
—O hearken, hearken! through the afternoon,

WILLIAM MORRIS

The grey tower sings a strange old tinkling tune!
Sweet, sweet, and sad, the toiling year's last breath,
Too satiate of life to strive with death.

And we too—will it not be soft and kind,
That rest from life, from patience and from pain,
That rest from bliss we know not when we find,
That rest from Love which ne'er the end can gain?—
—Hark, how the tune swells, that erewhile did
wane!

Look up, love!—ah, cling close and never move!
How can I have enough of life and love?

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Nymph's Song

THERE comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hill afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry . . .

Yet tottering as I am and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death

WILLIAM MORRIS

An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

JASON

The Haystack in the Floods

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.
By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,

WILLIAM MORRIS

Had to turn back with promises;
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dimly
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poitiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,

WILLIAM MORRIS

The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, "O," she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—

WILLIAM MORRIS

Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—"No."
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest

WILLIAM MORRIS

O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know." "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'
Eh—gag me, Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it—So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

WILLIAM MORRIS

For Robert—both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"

WILLIAM MORRIS

She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

ALGERNON CHARLES
SWINBURNE

1837-1909

The Sundew

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red.
Tread close, and either way you tread
Some faint black water jets between
Lest you should bruise the curious head.

A live thing maybe; who shall know?
The summer knows and suffers it;
For the cool moss is thick and sweet
Each side, and saves the blossom so
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns
About it; breathless though it be,
Bow down and worship; more than we
Is the least flower whose life returns,
Least weed renascent in the sea.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight
With wants, with many memories;
These see their mother what she is,
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright
The apple-coloured cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass,
Blown all one way to shelter it
From trample of strayed kine, with feet
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat.

You call it sundew: how it grows,
If with its colour it have breath,
If life taste sweet to it, if death
Pain its soft petal, no man knows:
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,
In these green miles the spring begun
Thy growth ere April had half done
With the soft secret of her ways
Or June made ready for the sun.

O red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower,
I have a secret halved with thee.
The name that is love's name to me
Thou knowest, and the face of her
Who is my festival to see.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,
Coloured the heavy moss-water:
Thou wert not worth green midsummer
Nor fit to live to August blue,
O sundew, not remembering her.

Ilicet

[*Extract*]

A LITTLE sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;
We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birth-day to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by grey old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens;
They know not what fruits wane or grow;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to know.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURN]

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
 Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
 How shall thy crying enter there?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter,
The likeness of them shall not alter
 For all the rumour of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after,
The tears of latter men, the laughter
 Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience
 Endure through days of deathlike date;
They bear the witness of things hidden;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
 As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
 Nor the graves open for their call.
The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
 The popped sleep, the end of all.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The Oblation

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;
All I can give you I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet:
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

Ave Atque Vale

In Memory of Charles Baudelaire

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what
bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the
gloom?

What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are
mute

And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled
 head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
 Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
 And from pale mouths some cadence of dead
 sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
 Sees only such things rise.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow;
 Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
 What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
 Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
 Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
 Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame
 flies,
 The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
 Are still the eluded eyes.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
 Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
 The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
 My spirit from communion of thy song—
 These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the
sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and
shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands
bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

*

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to
live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren
braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-
hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that
started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobeian womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

Tiresias

[*Extract*]

I HEAR a springing water, whose quick sound
Makes softer the soft sunless patient air,
And the wind's hand is laid on my thin hair
Light as a lover's, and the grasses round
Have odours in them of green bloom and rain
Sweet as the kiss wherewith sleep kisses pain.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I hear the low sound of the spring of time
Still beating as the low live throb of blood,
And where its waters gather head and flood
I hear change moving on them, and the chime
Across them of reverberate wings of hours
Sounding, and feel the future air of flowers.

The wind of change is soft as snow, and sweet
The sense thereof as roses in the sun,
The faint wind springing with the springs that run,
The dim sweet smell of flowering hopes, and heat
Of unbeholden sunrise; yet how long
I know not, till the morning put forth song.

The Garden of Proserpine

HERE, where the world is quiet;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labour,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

A Leave-taking

LET us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is here?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence; she will not weep.
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying 'If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap.'
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow;
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
 She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest; she will not love
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
 She would not love.

Let us give up, go down; she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,
 She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see.
Sing all once more together; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not
 been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
 She would not see.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

1840-1921

An Unfinished Song

“Cantat Deo qui vivit Deo.”

Yes, he was well-nigh gone and near his rest,
The year could not renew him; nor the cry
Of building nightingales about the nest;
Nor that soft freshness of the May-wind's sigh,

That fell before the garden scents, and died
Between the ampler leafage of the trees:
All these he knew not, lying open-eyed,
Deep in a dream that was not pain nor ease,

But death not yet. Outside a woman talked—
His wife she was—whose clicking needles sped
To faded phrases of complaint that balked
My rising words of comfort. Overhead,

A cage that hung amid the jasmine stars
Trembled a little, and a blossom dropped.
Then notes came pouring through the wicker bars,
Climbed half a rapid arc of song, and stopped.

“Is it a thrush?” I asked. “A thrush,” she said.
“That was Will's tune. Will taught him that
before
He left the doorway settle for his bed,
Sick as you see, and couldn't teach him more.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

“He’d bring his Bible here o’ nights, would Will,
Following the light, and whiles when it was dark
And days were warm, he’d sit there whistling still,
Teaching the bird. He whistled like a lark.”

“Jack! Jack!” A joyous flutter stirred the cage,
Shaking the blossoms down. The bird began;
The woman turned again to want and wage,
And in the inner chamber sighed the man.

How clear the song was! Musing as I heard,
My fancies wandered from the droning wife
To sad comparison of man and bird,—
The broken song, the uncompleted life,

That seemed a broken song; and of the two,
My thought a moment deemed the bird more blest,
That, when the sun shone, sang the notes it knew,
Without desire or knowledge of the rest.

Nay, happier man. For him futurity
Still hides a hope that this his earthly praise
Finds heavenly end, for surely will not He,
Solver of all, above his Flower of Days,

Teach him the song that no one living knows?
Let the man die, with that half-chant of his,—
What Now discovers not Hereafter shows,
And God will surely teach him more than this.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

Again the Bird. I turned, and passed along;
But Time and Death, Eternity and Change,
Talked with me ever, and the climbing song
Rose in my hearing, beautiful and strange.

The Dying of Tanneguy Du Bois

*En los nidos de antaño
No hay pájaros hogaño.*

SPANISH PROVERB

YEA, I am passed away, I think, from this;
Nor helps me herb, nor any leechcraft here,
But lift me hither the sweet cross to kiss,
And witness ye, I go without a fear.
Yea, I am sped, and never more shall see,
As once I dreamed, the show of shield and crest,
Gone southward to the fighting by the sea;—
There is no bird in any last year's nest!

Yea, with me now all dreams are done, I ween,
Grown faint and unremembered; voices call
High up, like misty warders dimly seen
Moving at morn on some Burgundian wall;
And all things swim—as when the charger stands
Quivering between the knees, and East and West
Are filled with flash of scarves and waving hands;—
There is no bird in any last year's nest!

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

Is she a dream I left in Aquitaine?—

My wife Giselle,—who never spoke a word,
Although I knew her mouth was drawn with pain,
Her eyelids hung with tears; and though I heard
The strong sob shake her throat, and saw the cord
Her necklace made about it;—she that prest
To watch me trotting till I reached the ford;—
There is no bird in any last year's nest!

Ah! I had hoped, God wot,—had longed that she
Should watch me from the little-lit tourelle,
Me, coming riding by the windy lea—
Me, coming back again to her, Giselle;
Yea, I had hoped once more to hear him call,
The curly-pate, who, rushen lance in rest,
Stormed at the lilies by the orchard wall;—
There is no bird in any last year's nest!

But how, my Masters, ye are wrapt in gloom!
This Death will come, and whom he loves he cleaves
Sheer through the steel and leather; hating whom
He smites in shameful wise behind the greaves.
'Tis a fair time with Dennis and the Saints,
And weary work to age, and want for rest,
When harness groweth heavy, and one faints,
With no bird left in any last year's nest!

Give ye good hap, then, all. For me, I lie
Broken in Christ's sweet hand, with whom shall rest
To keep me living, now that I must die;—
There is no bird in any last year's nest!

THOMAS HARDY

1840-1928

In a Wood

PALE beech and pine so blue,
Set in one clay,
Bough to bough cannot you
Live out your day?
When the rains skim and skip,
Why mar sweet comradeship,
Blighting with poison-drip
Neighbourly spray?

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
As to a nest;
Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease—
Nature a soft release
From men's unrest.

But, having entered in,
Great growths and small
Show them to men akin—
Combatants all!
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
Elms stout and tall.

THOMAS HARDY

Touches from ash, O wych,
Sting you like scorn!
You, too, brave hollies, twitch
Sidelong from thorn.
Even the rank poplars bear
Lothly a rival's air,
Cankering in black despair
If overborne.

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found
Life-loyalties.

The Self-Unseeing

HERE is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

THOMAS HARDY

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam
Yet we were looking away!

After a Journey

HERETO I come to view a voiceless ghost;
Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?
Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,
And the unseen waters' ejaculations awe me.
Where you will next be there's no knowing,
Facing round about me everywhere,
With your put-coloured hair,
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.

Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
Through the years, through the dead scenes I have
tracked you;
What have you now found to say of our past—
Scanned across the dark space wherein I have lacked
you?
Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?
Things were not lastly as firstly well
With us twain, you tell?
But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.

I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
To the spots we knew when we haunted here
together,

THOMAS HARDY

The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone
At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
When you were all aglow,
And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn
whitens hazily.
Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

At Castle Boterel

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,
And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,
I look behind at the fading byway,
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted
In dry March weather. We climb the road
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted
To ease the sturdy pony's load
When he sighed and slowed.

THOMAS HARDY

What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of
Matters not much, nor to what it led,—
Something that life will not be balked of
Without rude reason till hope is dead,
And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind never,
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
By thousands more.

Primæval rocks form the road's steep border,
And much have they faced there, first and last,
Of the transitory in Earth's long order;
But what they record in colour and cast
Is—that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight
The substance now, one phantom figure
Remains on the slope, as when that night
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
I look back at it amid the rain
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,
And I shall traverse old love's domain
Never again.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

1844-1881

Silences

'Tis a world of silences. I gave a cry
In the first sorrow my heart could not withstand;
I saw men pause, and listen, and look sad,
As though an answer in their hearts they had;
Some turned away, some came and took my hand,
For all reply.

I stood beside a grave. Years had passed by;
Sick with unanswered life I turned to death,
And whispered all my question to the grave,
And watched the flowers desolately wave,
And grass stir on it with a fitful breath,
For all reply.

I raised my eyes to heaven; my prayer went high
Into the luminous mystery of the blue;
My thought of God was purer than a flame
And God it seemed a little nearer came,
Then passed; and greater still the silence grew,
For all reply.

By you! If I can speak before I die,
I spoke to you with all my soul, and when
I look at you 'tis still my soul you see.
Oh, in your heart was there no word for me?
All would have answered had you answered then
With even a Sigh.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

Song

Now I am on the earth,
What sweet things love me?
Summer, that gave me birth,
And glows on still above me;
The bird I loved a little while;
The rose I planted;
The woman in whose golden smile
Life seems enchanted.

Now I am in the grave,
What sweet things mourn me?
Summer, that all joys gave,
Whence death, alas! hath torn me;
One bird that sang to me; one rose
Whose beauty moved me;
One changeless woman; yea, all those
That living loved me.

Song

I WENT to her who loveth me no more,
And prayed her bear with me, if so she might;
For I had found day after day too sore,
And tears that would not cease night after night.
And so I prayed her, weeping, that she bore
To let me be with her a little; yea,
To soothe myself a little with her sight,
Who loved me once, ah! many a night and day.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

Then she who loveth me no more, maybe
She pitied somewhat: and I took a chain
To bind myself to her, and her to me;
Yea, so that I might call her mine again.
Lo! she forbade me not; but I and she
Fettered her fair limbs, and her neck more fair,
Chained the fair wasted white of love's domain,
And put gold fetters on her golden hair.

Oh! the vain joy it is to see her lie
Beside me once again; beyond release,
Her hair, her hand, her body, till she die,
All mine, for me to do with as I please!
For, after all, I find no chain whereby
To chain her heart to love me as before,
Nor fetter for her lips, to make them cease
From saying still she loveth me no more.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

1849-1903

Romance

Romance,

The Angel-Playmate, raining down
His golden influences
On all I saw, and all I dreamed and did,
Walked with me arm in arm,
Or left me, as one bediademed with straws
And bits of glass, to gladden at my heart

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Who had the gift to seek and feel and find
His fiery-hearted presence everywhere.
Even so dear Hesper, bringer of all good things,
Sends the same silver dews
Of happiness down her dim, delighted skies
On some poor collier-hamlet—(mound on mound
Of sifted squalor; here a soot-throated stalk
Sullenly smoking over a row
Of flat-faced hovels; black in the gritty air
A web of rails and wheels and beams; with strings
Of hurtling, tipping trams)—
As on the amorous nightingales
And roses of Shiraz, or the walls and towers
Of Samarcand—the Ineffable—whence you espy
The splendour of Ginnistan's embattled spears,
Like listed lightnings.

Samarcand!

That name of names! That star-ved belvedere
Builded against the Chambers of the South!
That outpost on the Infinite!

And behold!

Questing therefrom, you knew not what wild tide
Might overtake you: for one fringe,
One suburb, is stablished on firm earth; but one
Floats founded vague
In lubberlands delectable—isles of palm
And lotus, fortunate mains, far-shimmering seas,
The promise of wistful hills—
The shining, shifting Sovranties of Dream.

ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENT

OSCAR WILDE

1856-1900

Requiescat

TREAD lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

1859-1907

Daisy

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And with the sea-breeze hand in hand
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face
She gave me tokens three:—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word,—strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end,
Their scent survives their close:
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose.

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way:—
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

She went her unremembering way,
She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own.

Dream-Tryst

THE breaths of kissing night and day
Were mingled in the eastern Heaven:
Throbbing with unheard melody
Shook Lyra all its star-chord seven:
When dusk shrunk cold, and light trod shy,
And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey;
And souls went palely up the sky;
And mine to Lucidé.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

There was no change in her sweet eyes
Since last I saw those sweet eyes shine;
There was no change in her deep heart
Since last that deep heart knocked at mine.
Her eyes were clear, her eyes were Hope's,
Wherein did ever come and go
The sparkle of the fountain-drops
From her sweet soul below.

The chambers in the house of dreams
Are fed with so divine an air,
That Time's hoar wings grow young therein,
And they who walk there are most fair.
I joyed for me, I joyed for her,
Who with the Past meet girt about:
Where our last kiss still warms the air,
Nor can her eyes go out.

LIONEL JOHNSON

1867-1902

In Memory

[*Extract*]

AH! fair face gone from sight,
With all its light
Of eyes, that pierced the deep
Of human night!
Ah! fair face calm in sleep.

LIONEL JOHNSON

Ah! fair lips hushed in death!
Now their glad breath
Breathes not upon our air
Music, that saith
Love only, and things fair.

Ah! lost brother! Ah! sweet
Still hands and feet!
May those feet haste to reach,
Those hands to greet,
Us where love needs no speech.

Dead

IN Merioneth, over the sad moor
Drives the rain, the cold wind blows:
Past the ruinous church door,
The poor procession without music goes.

Lonely she wandered out her hour, and died.
Now the mournful curlew cries
Over her, laid down beside
Death's lonely people: lightly down she lies.

In Merioneth, the wind lives and wails,
On from hill to lonely hill:
Down the loud, triumphant gales,
A spirit cries *Be strong!* and cries *Be still!*

LIONEL JOHNSON

To Morfydd Dead

[*Extract*]

MORFYDD at midnight
Met the Nameless Ones:
Now she wanders on the winds,
White and lone.
I would give the light
Of eternal suns,
To be with her on the winds,
No more lone!

Oh, wild sea of air!
Oh, night's vast sweet noon!
We would wander through the night,
Star and star.
Nay! but she, most fair!
Sun to me and moon:
I the vassal of her flight,
Far and far.

Morfydd at midnight
Met the Nameless Ones:
Now she wanders on the winds,
White and lone.
Take from me the light,
God! of all Thy suns:
Give me her, who on the winds
Wanders lone!

ERNEST DOWSON

1867-1900

The Garden of Shadow

LOVE heeds no more the sighing of the wind
Against the perfect flowers: thy garden's close
Is grown a wilderness, where none shall find
One strayed, last petal of one last year's rose.

O bright, bright hair! O mouth like a ripe fruit!
Can famine be so nigh to harvesting?
Love, that was songful, with a broken lute
In grass of graveyards goeth murmuring.

Let the wind blow against the perfect flowers,
And all thy garden change and glow with spring:
Love is grown blind with no more count of hours
Nor part in seed-time nor in harvesting.

De Amore

SHALL one be sorrowful because of love,
Which hath no earthly crown,
Which lives and dies, unknown?
Because no words of his shall ever move
Her maiden heart to own
Him lord and destined master of her own:
Is Love so weak a thing as this,
Who can not lie awake,
Solely for his own sake,
For lack of the dear hands to hold, the lips to kiss,
A mere heart-ache?

ERNEST DOWSON

Nay, though love's victories be great and sweet,
Nor vain and foolish toys,
His crowned, earthly joys,
Is there no comfort then in love's defeat?
Because he shall defer,
For some short span of years all part in her,
Submitting to forego
The certain peace which happier lovers know;
Because he shall be utterly disowned,
Nor length of service bring
Her least awakening:
Foiled, frustrate and alone, misunderstood discrowned,
Is Love less King?

Grows not the world to him a fairer place,
How far soever his days
Pass from his Lady's ways,
From mere encounter with her golden face?
Though all his sighing be vain,
Shall he be heavy-hearted and complain?
Is she not still a star,
Deeply to be desired, worshipped afar,
A beacon-light to aid
From bitter-sweet delights, Love's masquerade?
Though he lose many things,
Though much he miss:
The heart upon his heart, *the hand that clings*,
The memorable first kiss,
Love that is love at all,
Needs not an earthly coronal;

ERNEST DOWSON

Love is himself his own exceeding great reward,
A mighty lord!

Lord over life and all the ways of breath,
Mighty and strong to save
From the devouring grave;
Yea, whose dominion doth out-tyrant death,
Thou who art life and death in one,
The night, the sun;
Who art, when all things seem:
Foiled, frustrate and forlorn, rejected of to-day
Go with me all my way,
And let me not blaspheme.

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